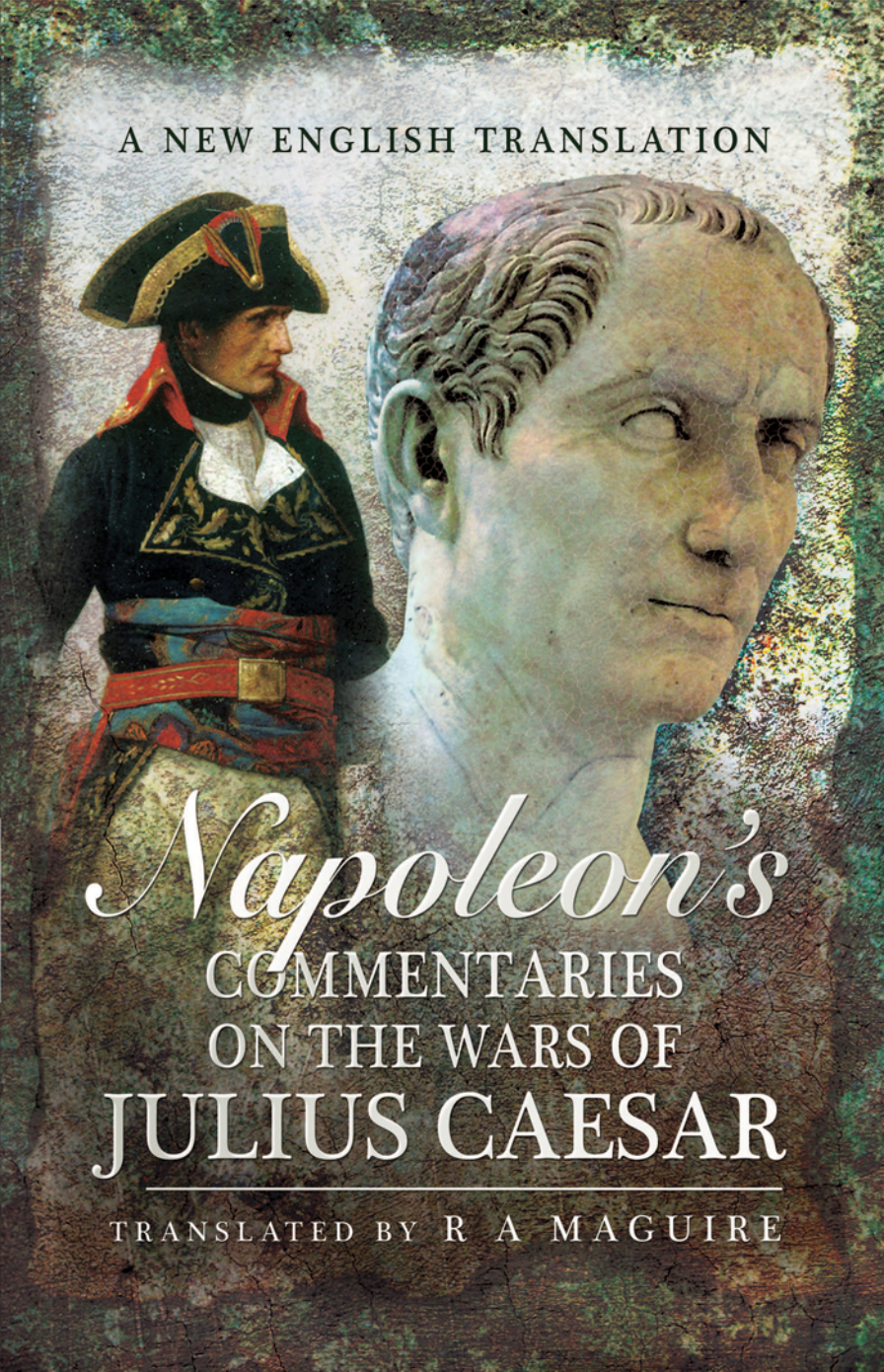
A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION



Napoleon's COMMENTARIES ON THE WARS OF JULIUS CAESAR

TRANSLATED BY R A MAGUIRE

Napoleon's Commentaries on the Wars of Julius Caesar

Napoleon's Commentaries on the Wars of Julius Caesar

by
Napoleon Bonaparte

A New English Translation

Translated with an introduction
and notes by
R.A. Maguire

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The endpapers show a diagram of Napoleon's bridges over the Danube which was included in the 1836 First Edition of this work. This bridging operation is discussed in Chapter 4 in connection with Caesar's first bridge over the Rhine.

To Rosemary

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Introduction

After his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the Emperor Napoleon was exiled by the British Government to the remote island of St Helena, where he died in 1821. While on St Helena, Napoleon dictated a commentary on the wars of Julius Caesar which was later published in 1836 under the title *Précis des Guerres de César*. (This original publication is here referred to as the First Edition.) In each chapter he summarises the events of one campaign, then adds comments from the standpoint of his own military knowledge. In the final chapter he meditates on Caesar's assassination. In the Commentary, therefore, one of the most outstanding military commanders of recent centuries applies his expert judgement to the campaigns fought by one of the most successful generals of ancient times.

Over the nearly two millennia between Caesar and Napoleon, some aspects of warfare had changed greatly, notably the introduction of firearms. But much remained the same: the rate of movement of armies (at the foot pace of horse or man); human muscle power as the main source of energy for construction work; some military techniques, notably bridge construction; as well as the actual territory fought over by Caesar and later by Napoleon. Napoleon's commentary thus provides a valuable and highly authoritative insight into Caesar's wars, as well as supplying a window into Napoleon's own thinking and attitudes. Napoleon in places detects mistakes on the part of Caesar and his enemies, and says what they should have done differently. Napoleon's early technical training as an artillery officer adds depth to his commentary, as when he comments in detail on techniques for bridging rivers, or expands on Caesar's description of building fortifications by adding his own knowledge of the manpower and time which would have been required.

There are significant parallels between the careers of Caesar and Napoleon beyond the military arena. Both seized power by unconstitutional

means; both were famous womanisers. Both were responsible for profound and long-lasting reforms in the civil sphere.

Caesar

Gaius Julius Caesar was born in 100 BC and was assassinated in 44 BC. Caesar conquered most of Gaul in a series of campaigns during the 50s BC. In the following decade, he overthrew Rome's republican government and for five years fought and won a protracted civil war. But there was much more to Caesar than being a successful soldier. Thanks to the *cursus honorum*, the Roman career path for public men, he had held a considerable variety of positions in the public administration before taking charge of his legions in Gaul. This may be illustrated by comparing his career with that of another army commander in North-West Europe exactly 2,000 years later. Bernard Montgomery was land forces commander for the D-Day invasion of Europe in 1944. Montgomery had joined the British Army straight from school and he spent his entire active career as a professional soldier. But if his career path had matched that of Caesar, then by the time of the D-Day landings, as well as being army commander, Montgomery would also have been a top barrister, a leading politician and the current Archbishop of Canterbury. And he would previously have served as Archbishop of York, Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Alderman of the City of London, High Court Judge, Viceroy of India and Prime Minister. (This analogy alludes to Caesar's status as a prominent advocate in the courts, a leading member of the Senate and Pontifex Maximus, and to his previous appointments as High Priest of Jupiter, quaestor, aedile, praetor, Governor of Further Spain and Consul.)

Napoleon

Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica in 1769 and died in 1821. He was 20 years old at the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. He was trained as an artillery officer and came to prominence in 1795, when he deployed troops and cannon to fire on Parisian rioters who threatened the survival of the revolutionary government. In 1799, he came to power in

France through a coup d'état. For most of his career, from 1793 to 1815, Napoleon was fighting France's enemies – mainly Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia at different times – and achieving a succession of victories on the battlefield.

Following the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Napoleon surrendered to the British and was exiled to the remote island of St Helena, where he passed the final six years of his life. Here he lived in the damp and foggy surroundings of Longwood House, together with a small staff of faithful followers who had voluntarily accompanied him into exile.

Napoleon's Observations

Napoleon's Observations at the end of each chapter contain his comments on many aspects of Caesar's wars. Some of the most striking are highlighted below.

In 55 BC, Caesar built a bridge over the Rhine on piled supports in the space of ten days – a feat often regarded as little short of miraculous. Napoleon will have none of this, saying (with rare modesty) that any modern army could do the same, and explaining in detail how in 1809, prior to the Battle of Wagram, his own forces bridged an even larger river, the Danube, in a comparable space of time.

Napoleon goes on to explain how he also prefabricated a pontoon bridge 160 yards long, out of the sight of the enemy on the opposite bank. The bridge was swung around as a single unit in a very short space of time so that it suddenly spanned the river and troops could charge across.

Napoleon discusses possible improvements to field bridging techniques, such as pontoons broken down into modular sections; pontoons made invulnerable to leakage by being filled with cork; and waterproof flotation arrangements for individual soldiers.

Napoleon discusses at length the utility of field fortifications in the gunpowder age; he notes that a Roman army in a typical fortified camp with ditch, bank and palisade could defend itself against superior forces, but that in modern times such a fortification would rapidly be smashed by artillery. He asks himself whether the armies of his time are right or wrong to abandon the pick and shovel. Arguably one answer to his

question lies in the trench systems of the First World War, in which both the trenches themselves and the barbed wire in front were hard to destroy with artillery.

The crowning encounter in the conquest of Gaul was the siege of Alesia and subsequent capture of Vercingetorix. Napoleon opines on what Vercingetorix should have done differently in order to improve his chances of victory.

Early in the Civil War, Caesar's enemies, led by Pompey, abandoned Rome in the face of Caesar's advance into Italy and made their way to Greece. Napoleon argues that this was a blunder, and that Pompey should at all costs have held Rome and there assembled all the legions available to him.

A little later, Caesar carried his army across the Adriatic to Greece – a risky operation, given Pompey's naval superiority. Napoleon concludes that Caesar should rather have assembled his legions in Northern Italy and then travelled overland to Greece via Illyria.

Napoleon deplores the time wasted by Caesar on his adventure in Alexandria, time which would have been better spent mopping up the remnants of the Pompeian party before they could regroup. Sadly, Napoleon, himself a great ladies' man, has little to say about Caesar's dalliance with Cleopatra.

Cato the Younger, the great champion of the Republic, committed suicide in Africa rather than fall into Caesar's hands – a deed which has often been admired. But Napoleon points out that he could easily have joined other Pompeians in Spain, where his presence might have made all the difference in the final campaign of the Civil War. Furthermore, if Cato had lived for just two more years, he would have outlived Caesar and could have played a major role in the events which followed. To Napoleon, Cato's suicide was a blot on his life and showed an inability to recognize the proper time and place for such a deed.

Napoleon (no doubt with his own career in mind) argues that Caesar's seizure of power was entirely legitimate, largely on the grounds that the old institutions had broken down and no better alternative existed. He pours scorn on the motives of Brutus and the other assassins of Caesar, saying that their objections to Caesar's rule were based on obsolete prejudices derived from ancient Greek history.

Napoleon refutes at length the idea that Caesar was about to make himself king when he died – an interesting conclusion coming from a man who himself had taken the title of emperor.

How the Commentary was written

Napoleon said that the pain of the stomach cancer which would kill him was like being cut by a razor blade. He often slept poorly on St Helena as his health deteriorated, and Count Louis-Joseph Marchand, his faithful *valet de chambre*, often read to Napoleon or wrote to his dictation at such times. In this way, Napoleon's *Commentary on Caesar's Wars* was entirely dictated to Marchand over the course of Napoleon's long periods of insomnia. Napoleon declared that the work brought some alleviation to his sufferings, and strewed a few flowers on the path which was conducting him to the grave.

Appendix and end notes

Napoleon expresses measurements in the pre-revolutionary French units with which he was brought up and educated. These are essentially retained in the translation, using broadly equivalent English terms: so '*mille*' is translated as 'mile' and '*pied*' as 'foot'. This approach maintains the internal rigour of Napoleon's arithmetic and avoids burdening the reader with unfamiliar or incongruous terms. Further details are given in the Appendix.

The end notes to each chapter offer comments on what Napoleon has written; they do not attempt to elucidate Caesar's wars as such, except where appropriate to aid comprehension of the present text. For a fuller understanding of Caesar's campaigns, the reader is referred to modern English editions of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and *De Bello Civili*.

Caesar himself wrote the famous account of the Gallic wars, apart from the last section describing the final year of campaigning. He also wrote most of the account of the subsequent Civil War, except the parts describing the Alexandrian and subsequent campaigns which were added by others. The notes on these campaigns therefore refer to 'the Latin account' rather than to 'Caesar's account'.

The text

The text has been translated from a copy of the First Edition of 1836.

The translation tries to reproduce the feel of the French First Edition, including Napoleon's approach to punctuation and (as far as possible) his tone and style.

This is thought to be the first full English translation of the work.

The translation adopts Napoleon's choice of names for peoples and places, with adjustments where there is a common English version which differs slightly from the French – thus 'Lombardy' for 'Lombardie' for example. Napoleon largely adopts the place names of his own era.

In some places the translation departs from the published French text of the First Edition because the latter appears incorrect, particularly when checked against the ancient historical accounts. Sometimes this seems due to a typographical or dictation error. In other cases, it seems that Napoleon was mistaken about a place name or other detail mentioned by Caesar or another ancient writer. Napoleon's poor health may have limited his ability to review the text.

When Count Marchand published the First Edition in 1836, he made a virtue of following the exact text dictated by the great man, with no alterations. Thus an opportunity to check and correct the text was missed.

In the present translation, errors as mentioned above are corrected, in the course of the main text where practicable, with the aim of providing the reader with a reasonably clear and accurate text. The more significant changes are explained in the Notes. No attempt has been made to edit Napoleon's text more broadly – for example by bringing together repeated references to particular themes.

The diagram shown on the end papers is reproduced from the First Edition and depicts Napoleon's bridges over the Danube in 1809. He discusses this bridging operation in detail in Chapter 4 in connection with his discussion of Caesar's first bridge over the Rhine.

Chapter 1

Gallic War. First campaign (58 BC)

I. Caesar

Caesar was born in 100 BC and died in the year 44; he lived for 56 years. He was only 16 when he suffered under the persecutions of Sulla. He first bore arms under the praetor Thermus, earned the Civic Crown at the capture of Mitylene, travelled to Cilicia, stayed at the court of King Nicomedes in Bithynia, was held prisoner by pirates for forty days, returned to Rome after the death of Sulla, prosecuted Dolabella (a man of consular status), failed in his attack, withdrew to Rhodes and studied rhetoric at the famous school there.

On his return, the people successively appointed him military tribune, quaestor, aedile and pontiff. He pronounced the funeral oration of his aunt Julia, his father's sister and wife of Marius. The Roman people were pleased to see the image of Marius amongst the images of the Julii; later he placed on the Capitol the statue of this famous vanquisher of the Cimbri, which earned him the disapproval of the Senate. He obtained the recall of Cinna, his father-in-law, who had been proscribed along with Sertorius. He condemned to death Sulla's assassins, the murderers of the proscribed.

The people, who revered him, elected him praetor in the year 62.[1] His magistrature was stormy and the Senate declared against him. He governed Cisalpine Gaul[2] and, a year later, Spain, as propraetor. He commanded thirty cohorts in Portugal. His army proclaimed him Imperator. On return to Rome, he sought both a triumph and the consulship. He concluded with Pompey and Crassus the pact known as the first triumvirate and married his daughter Julia to Pompey, who became deeply enamoured of her.

Appointed consul for the year 59, he conducted himself like a people's tribune, published agrarian reform laws, distributed land to the poor and recognized Ptolemy, King of Egypt and Ariovistus, King of the Suebi, as

friends of the Roman people. The Senate opposed him at every turn. He was leader of the Marian faction.

In 58, he was appointed governor of Illyria and Cisalpine Gaul for five years: he was given three legions. A few weeks later, he added to these governorships that of Transalpine Gaul, with a fourth legion. He also raised two new legions; the one named 'the Larks', composed of Gauls, was to distinguish itself. He began the Gallic war with six legions; during the course of the war the number rose to twelve.

Caesar conducted eight campaigns in Gaul, as well as two invasions of Britain and two incursions onto the right bank of the Rhine. In Gaul, he fought nine major battles, conducted three important sieges and reduced 500 miles of territory to the status of Roman provinces, thereby enriching the treasury by eight millions of ordinary contributions.[3] During the Civil War, Caesar fought in Italy, Spain, Illyria, Egypt, Asia and Africa in the years 49, 48, 47, 46 and 45; he fought six major battles, of which four were against Pompey's Roman legions and two against barbarians. During these thirteen campaigns, he was beaten three times, at Dyrrachium, Alexandria and in Africa; but these setbacks had no effect on the outcome of his wars. His lieutenants suffered some serious defeats, which he reversed by his presence.

II. Helvetian war

Gaul was divided into four parts: the Belgian, Celtic and Aquitainian regions, and lastly the Roman province.[4] Belgium lay between the Seine, the Rhine and the sea; the Celtic region between the Seine, the Rhône, the Garonne and the ocean; Aquitaine, between the Garonne and the Pyrenees; Roman Gaul comprised the Dauphiné, Savoie, Lyonnais, Provence and a part of Lower Languedoc on the Mediterranean coast.

Caesar's authority extended over both Transalpine and Cisalpine Gaul, including the entire Po valley; it was bordered in the east by the Rubicon, in the Romagna, and in the west by the Magra, near the Gulf of Spezia. Thus he had under his authority the defence of all of Italy's land frontiers, the entire barrier of the Alps and also the provinces of Illyria.

Gaul was composed of petty states which were governed as republics and could ally together in the common interest. Assemblies of the whole nation

took place in the territory of Chartres. The Gauls crossed the Alps and invaded Northern Italy six or seven centuries before the Christian era; there they founded the cities of Milan, Mantua, Verona and others; this country was called Cisalpine Gaul. The Romans entered Gaul for the first time in 209 BC. Invited by the people of Marseille, they crossed the Var, following the Corniche in order to avoid the Alps. In 123 BC, the consul Sextius built Aix-en-Provence. The following year, the people of Autun appealed to the consul Domitius for aid against the people of Auvergne, who were allied to the Allobroges, or people of Dauphiné.

The armies met near Avignon, where the Romans were victorious. The next year, a further battle took place at the confluence of the Isère and the Rhône; the Gauls were again beaten, and many drowned in the river. Dauphiné and Provence then became a Roman province. Some years later, Rome founded a colony at Narbonne, which extended its dominion into Languedoc.

In the present year, 58 BC, the Helvetians, or Swiss, and the people of Breisgau resolved to leave their country and migrate to Saintonge, near to the shores of the ocean. They burnt twelve of their towns and 400 of their villages, provided themselves with enough flour for three months, and 368,000 people, of whom 90,000 could bear arms, set off with their carts and possessions. Caesar, who had just been given authority over Gaul, hastened forward, reached Geneva on the eighth day and had the bridge over the Rhône broken down. There was only one legion in the province; he summoned the three old legions which were in Illyria as well as the two new legions which he had raised. He constructed a fortification 16ft high and 14 miles long from the Rhône to the Jura mountains. While he was undertaking these defensive preparations, the Helvetians sent to ask him to allow them passage across the Roman province: he sent back a refusal on 13 April (23 January).[5] The Helvetians, despairing of forcing the fortifications, appealed to the people of Franche-Comté who were more accommodating. They crossed the Jura and arrived at the Saône. Meanwhile, Caesar had re-crossed the Alps in order to speed up the march of his legions. At their head he entered Lyon, reached Chalon-sur-Saône, surprised the people of Zurich who were encamped on the left bank of this river, destroyed them entirely, set off in pursuit of the rest of the Helvetians and followed

them for fifteen days with six legions and a body of cavalry from the town of Autun. At one day's march from this town, the Helvetians launched a surprise attack: they were a dauntless people. Caesar only had time to place his four experienced legions in a three-line battle order halfway up a hill, and the two new legions with the baggage at the summit. After a most stubborn combat, the Helvetians were beaten; they decamped in the night, and four days later arrived near Langres, pursued by Caesar, who spared them, obliging them to return to their own country and rebuild their towns. These peoples were reduced to less than a third of their original number (130,000).[6]

III. War with Ariovistus

Ariovistus, King of the Suebi, had been declared a friend of the Roman people. Invited into Gaul by the people of the Auvergne and Franche-Comté, he defeated the people of Autun and their allies in a battle near Pontarlier, and compelled all these little republics to pay him tribute and provide him with hostages. Later he extended his impositions to the people of Franche-Comté itself and appropriated a third of their territory, which he distributed to 120,000 Germans. A still greater number, attracted by this allurement, were preparing to cross the Rhine; 24,000 had departed from Constance and the 100 cantons of the Suebi had already reached the banks of the river. Gaul was about to be shaken to its foundations and had to seek Roman help.

Caesar demanded a meeting with Ariovistus. The reply being unsatisfactory, he crossed the Saône and surprised Besançon. After some days of rest, he continued his march in the direction of the Rhine. On the seventh day, after a detour to avoid mountains, the two armies came together. Caesar and Ariovistus met, but nothing was resolved. The Germans were men of tall stature, strong and brave. After some manoeuvring, the two armies fought on a battlefield 40 miles from the Rhine. Ariovistus was beaten and his army pursued as far as the river, which the king crossed in a small boat. This disaster astounded the Germans and saved Gaul. Caesar then crossed the Alps, leaving his army in its quarters under the command of Labienus.

Thus, in this first campaign, he won two great battles against the Helvetians and the Suebi under Ariovistus, to whom were joined the peoples of Constance, Bohemia, Strasbourg and Mayence.

IV. Observations

1. Caesar took eight days to travel from Rome to Geneva: today this journey could be completed in four days.
2. The ordinary field fortifications of the Romans consisted of a V-shaped ditch 12ft wide by 9ft deep: with the spoil they erected a bank 4ft high and 12ft wide, on which they raised a parapet 4ft high made of stakes driven 2ft into the ground; which meant that the crest of the parapet was 17ft higher than the bottom of the ditch. A 2-yard running section of this fortification, requiring 324 cubic feet of excavation (12 cubic yards), could be completed by one man in thirty-two hours, or three days of work, or by twelve men in two or three hours.[7] The legion which did the work could have completed its 14 miles of defences, involving 168,000 cubic yards of excavation, in 120 hours, or ten to fifteen days' work.[8]
3. The Helvetians tried to cross the Rhône in the month of April. (The Roman calendar was then in great disorder; it was ahead by 80 days:[9] thus 13 April corresponded to 23 January.) From then on the legions from Illyria had time to reach Lyon and the upper Saône, a journey which would have taken 50 days. Caesar defeated the Helvetians in battle twenty days after his crossing of the Saône: this battle therefore took place between 1 May and 15 May, corresponding to mid-August by the Roman calendar.
4. The Helvetians must have been courageous to have remained on the offensive for so long against a professional Roman army as large as their own. It is said that they took twenty days to cross the Saône, which would give a strange idea of their poor organization, but hardly seems credible.
5. The Helvetians numbered 130,000 on their return to Switzerland, but we should not conclude from this that their losses were 230,000 men, because many will have taken refuge and settled in Gaulish towns, and

many others returned home later on. The number of their combatants was 90,000, amounting to one in four of the population, which seems a very high ratio. Some 30,000 from the canton of Zurich had been killed or taken at the passage of the Saône; thus they had at most 60,000 combatants at the battle. Caesar, with six legions and many auxiliaries, had the larger army.

6. The army of Ariovistus was no larger than that of Caesar. The number of Germans established in Franche-Comté was 120,000 men; but what a difference there must have been between armies formed as militias, consisting of all the men of a nation capable of bearing arms, and a Roman army composed of line troops who were professional soldiers and mostly unmarried. The Helvetians and the Suebi were without doubt brave: but what can bravery achieve against an army disciplined and organized like the Roman army? Thus there is nothing extraordinary about the successes achieved by Caesar during this campaign. However, this does not diminish the glory which he deserves.
7. The battle against Ariovistus took place in the month of September, in the neighbourhood of Belfort.

Chapter 2

Gallic War. Second campaign (57 BC)

I. War with the Belgians. Battle on the Aisne

The Belgians were of barbarian race. Their forefathers had crossed the Rhine, attracted by the beauty of the country. They had driven out the original inhabitants and settled there. They were reckoned to be the bravest of the Gauls: the Teutones and the Cimbri respected them and were afraid to offend them. The defeat of the Helvetians, the defeat of Ariovistus and the presence of the Roman army, which unusually was wintering in the Celtic region, aroused their resentment; they feared for their independence. After spending all winter in preparation, they took to the field in the spring with an army of 300,000 men commanded by Galba, King of Soissons, which supplied a contingent of 50,000 men. The people of Beauvais provided the same number, those of Hainault 50,000, of Artois 15,000, of Amiens 10,000, of Saint-Omer 25,000, of Brabant 9,000, of the Pays de Caux 10,000, of Vexin 10,000, of Namur 30,000, and lastly there were 40,000 Germans from Cologne, Liège and Luxembourg. The newcomers crossed the mountains into Caesar's territory. Caesar raised two new legions and arrived with them at Sens during May (February by our calendar).

The peoples of the Celtic region remained loyal to him; those of Autun, Reims and Sens supplied him with an army, which he placed under the command of Divitiacus with orders to ravage the territory of Beauvais. Caesar encamped with his eight legions at Pont-à-Vaire on the Aisne in the territory of Reims. He established a bridgehead on the left bank, and enclosed his camp with a rampart 12ft high, in front of which was a ditch 18ft wide. The Belgian army was not slow to appear; it invested the little town of Bièvre, 8 miles from the Roman camp. This town had a garrison from Reims and was reinforced during the night, which the next day led Galba to march straight to Pont-à-Vaire. But finding the camp perfectly

fortified, he took up a position 2 miles away. His forces occupied 7 miles of ground. After several days of skirmishes, Caesar marched out with six legions, leaving the two new ones to guard the camp. For fear of being outflanked, he built two lines of fortification, 600–800 yards long, perpendicular to the battle line; they were equipped with towers and machines. Galba wanted to bring matters to a conclusion with a battle, but he was hindered by the marsh which separated the two camps. He hoped the Romans would cross it, but they were too cautious. Each side retired to its camp at nightfall. Then Galba crossed the Aisne; during the night he attacked the defences on the left bank and started ravaging the territory of Reims, but with his cavalry and light troops Caesar drove him up the left bank of the Aisne. A few days later, the people of Beauvais learned that the people of Autun were at their frontiers and threatening their capital. They promptly broke camp and went to the aid of their country. This defection, once seen, was imitated; every man withdrew to his own country. Two days later, the Romans made a march of 24 miles and attacked Soissons. They were driven off but the inhabitants surrendered the following day and gave hostages after mediation by the people of Reims. Caesar then marched on Beauvais and made peace with the inhabitants on the advice of the people of Autun, contenting himself with taking 600 hostages. Amiens and several towns in Picardy also submitted.

II. Defeat of the Belgians of Hainault. Battle on the Sambre

The people of Hainault,[1] the most savage and belligerent of the Belgians, had joined forces with the people of Artois and Vermandois. They were encamped on the right bank of the Sambre at Maubeuge, protected by a hill and in the middle of a forest. Caesar marched on them with eight legions. Reaching the banks of the Sambre, Caesar laid out his camp on top of a hill. His cavalry and light troops crossed the river and took possession of a small hill which overlooked the territory of the left bank, though lower than the one on which the Roman army planned to camp. The six legions which had arrived were distributed around the perimeter of the camp to fortify it, when all of a sudden the enemy army burst out

of the forest, routed the cavalry and light troops, chased after them into the Sambre, rushed upon the Roman army and attacked it by every means. Generals, officers, soldiers, all were surprised; each took up his sword, with no time to put on armour. The Ninth and Tenth Legions were positioned on the left of the camp; the Eighth and Eleventh were on the side closest to the enemy, more or less forming the centre; the Seventh and Twelfth were on the other side, to the right. The Roman army did not form a line, instead occupying a circumference; the legions were isolated, lacking order; the cavalry and light armed troops were fleeing in terror over the plain. Labienus rallied the Ninth and Tenth Legions, attacked the enemy right – which was made up of the men of Artois – drove them into the Sambre and took possession of the hill and of their camp on the left bank. The legions in the centre, after many difficulties, drove off the forces of Vermandois and pursued them over the river; but the Seventh and Twelfth Legions had been surrounded and were under attack by the entire army of Hainault, which was the Gauls' strongest force: they were desperate. The barbarians, having outflanked the legions, got control of the camp. The two surrounded legions were on the point of being entirely defeated when the two legions of the baggage escort arrived, while in another direction Labienus sent the Tenth Legion to attack the enemy rear: luck changed; the battlefield was covered with corpses of the Belgians of the left wing of the army, who had crossed the Sambre. The Belgians of Hainault were practically annihilated, such that some days later when the old men and women emerged from the marshes to beg the victor for mercy, it turned out that this warlike nation had been reduced from 600 senators to three, and from 60,000 men able to bear arms to only 500. For part of the day the state of the Romans had been so desperate that a force of cavalry from Trèves abandoned them and returned home, announcing everywhere the destruction of the Roman army.

III. Destruction of the Belgians below Namur. Siege of Falais

The people of Namur were on the march to join those of Hainault. When they learned of the catastrophe, they took refuge in the town of Falais, which

was naturally fortified; it is on the banks of the Mehaigne, 6 miles from the Meuse and 15 from Namur and Liège.

The people of Namur were descended from the Cimbri and Teutones.

Caesar marched on them with all dispatch, invested Falais, built a line of contravallation 15 miles around and 12ft high[2] and began a formal siege. When the barbarians saw the Romans' enormous towers being moved with ease towards their walls, the contrast between their enemies' moral strength and their physical weakness filled them with astonishment and dread: they sought Caesar's clemency, threw their weapons down from the walls and offered hostages. Caesar received them with pleasure; but at midnight the barbarians again took up arms and launched a surprise attack on the Roman camp, spreading alarm and disorder. They were driven off with the loss of 4,000 men. The following day, the victor entered the place and sold all 54,000 inhabitants into slavery.

So ended Caesar's second campaign. He placed his troops into winter quarters, himself crossing into Cisalpine Gaul. During this campaign he fought one major battle, that of the Sambre, and a number of combats on the Aisne, and conducted a siege. The news of such great successes filled the city of Rome with joy. The Senate ordered fifteen days of public thanksgiving, which was unprecedented.

IV. Observations

1. In this campaign, Caesar had eight legions and, besides the auxiliaries attached to each legion, a great number of Gauls, both foot and horse, and a great many light troops from the Balearic Isles, Crete and Africa, giving him a most numerous army. The 300,000 men with which the Belgians opposed him came from a variety of nations, without discipline or consistency.
2. Commentators have supposed that the town which the Belgians sought to surprise before marching to Caesar's camp was either Fismes or Laon: this is wrong. The town is Bièvre. Caesar's camp was below Pont-à-Vaire; he was encamped with his right adjacent to the bend in the Aisne between Pont-à-Vaire and the village of Chaudarde, his left on a small stream; opposite were the marshes which one sees there still.

Galba had his right towards Craonne, his left on the stream of La Mielle and the marsh at his front. Caesar's camp at Pont-à-Vaire was 8 miles from Bièvre, 14 from Reims, 22 from Soissons and 16 from Laon, which satisfies all the conditions of the text of the Commentaries.[3] The combats on the Aisne took place at the start of July.

3. The Battle of the Sambre took place at the end of July in the vicinity of Maubeuge.
4. The position of Falais fulfils the conditions of the Commentaries. Caesar states that the contravallation which he established around the town was 12ft high, with a ditch 18ft deep: this appears to be in error; we should rather read 18ft wide, as a depth of 18ft would imply a width of 36ft feet, implying an excavated volume (as the ditch was V-shaped) of 324 cubic feet per running foot of rampart. This fortification probably had a ditch 18ft[4] wide by 9ft deep, giving an excavation of eighty-one cubic feet per running foot of rampart; with the spoil he will have built a bank and parapet, of which the crest was 18ft above the bottom of the ditch.[5]

   It is difficult to make purely military comments on a text which is so brief and on armies so different. How are we to compare a Roman army of the line, raised and selected from across Italy and the Roman provinces, with barbarian armies composed of mass levies, brave and ferocious but with so little knowledge of war that they did not know how to construct a bridge, build rapid field fortifications or erect a tower, and who were astonished to see towers approaching their ramparts?
5. Nevertheless, Caesar has rightly been criticized for allowing himself to be taken by surprise at the Battle of the Sambre, given the number of cavalry and light troops available to him. It is true that his cavalry and light troops had crossed the Sambre; but from where he stood he could see that they had stopped 300 yards from him at the edge of the forest, so he should have kept some of his troops under arms, or waited for his scouts to traverse the forest and establish the state of the country. He justifies himself by saying that the banks of the Sambre were so steep that he thought himself safe in the place where he wished to encamp.

Chapter 3

Gallic War. Third campaign (56 BC)[1]

I. War in Valais

Caesar, wishing to make sure of a direct route from Milan into Gaul via the Simplon, the St Bernard and the valley of the Rhône, sent Galba[2] and the Twelfth Legion into the Valais; as soon as Galba entered this country, he received delegates from various cantons who sought peace and offered hostages. He established his winter quarters in the town of Martigni, which he fortified with a ditch and bank. However, the locals were far from willing to submit; they launched a coordinated rising and hurried from far and wide to invest and attack the Roman legions. The fight was hot and deadly; success seemed to favour the locals until Galba mounted a sortie through all the gates of the camp, fell upon them, put them to flight and killed more than 10,000 men. Despite this great success, the Romans did not feel safe in so difficult a country, and the next day they marched out in order to cross back over Lake Geneva and take up quarters in Transalpine Gaul.

II. War in Brittany

At the end of the previous campaign, Caesar had detached the young Crassus (who later perished with his father against the Parthians) with one legion to subjugate Brittany. He had made for Vannes, travelled around the main towns of this large province and had everywhere received the submission of the people as well as hostages. He had taken up winter quarters in Anjou, near Nantes. But the Bretons, waking from their initial stupor, rose in revolt. Vannes, their principal town, gave the signal. Everywhere they arrested the Roman officers, who were spread out across the province on a variety of missions. Vannes was a large and rich town thanks to trade with Britain; its coasts were full of harbours, and the Morbihan, a kind of inland sea, was covered with shipping and ensured its defence. Throwing aside

the mask, the confederates informed Crassus that he should return their hostages, whereupon they would send back his officers; and that they were determined to retain their liberty, and would not cheerfully submit to the slavery of Rome.

In spring, Caesar arrived at Nantes. He sent Labienus with a body of cavalry to Trèves to contain the Belgians, and detached Crassus with twelve cohorts and a large number of cavalry into Aquitaine to prevent the inhabitants of that province from sending help to the Bretons. He sent Sabinus with three legions into the Cotentin and gave the command of his fleet to Decimus Brutus: he had brought ships from Saintonge and Poitou, and had galleys constructed at Nantes; he recruited sailors from the coasts of the Mediterranean. But the ships of the people of Vannes were larger and crewed by more skilful sailors; their anchors were secured by iron chains, their sails were of supple leather, and the rams on the Roman galleys could do nothing against hulls so solidly built. Finally, the Breton ships' sides were very high, which enabled them to command not only the decks of the Roman galleys but even the towers which were sometimes erected there; the Roman javelins, thrown upwards from below, had no effect, while those of the Bretons, thrown downwards from above, did great harm. But the Roman ships were equipped with sharp scythes attached to long poles, with which they cut the rigging and shrouds and brought down the yards and the masts. Disabled and immobilized, these great ships became the scene of infantry battles. Thanks to a drop in the wind, the entire fleet of Vannes fell to the Romans. In this extremity, the people of Vannes surrendered unconditionally. Caesar had all the senators killed and sold all the inhabitants into slavery.

III. War in Lower Normandy

Sabinus arrived in the Cotentin, selected a convenient and comfortable site for a camp and set about fortifying it. Viridovix, general of the people of Coutances, had enlarged his army by attracting unattached men from all over Gaul. The peoples of Le Mans, Évreux and Lisieux slaughtered their senators who opposed the war, closed their gates to the Romans and added their troops to those of Viridovix, who thus found himself at the head of a considerable army. He camped 2 miles from the Roman camp and sought

constantly to provoke battle. Sabinus resorted to a stratagem to inflame the audacity of the barbarians: he sent to them a false spy, who told them that the Romans were about to decamp by night and march to the aid of Caesar. At this news the Gauls hurled themselves upon the camp: the Romans, who were expecting them, sortied through two gates to attack them and put them to flight, despite their vain efforts to rally. The Gauls were utterly routed. All the peoples of Lower Normandy submitted.

IV. War in Aquitaine

Crassus was no less fortunate in Aquitaine. Reinforced by auxiliary cavalry and numerous cohorts raised by Toulouse, Carcasonne, Narbonne and several other towns of the Roman province, he crossed the Garonne. The inhabitants confronted him with numerous bodies of cavalry, which was their principal arm. Crassus was the victor and mounted a siege of Lectoure, their capital. The town held out for a long time; the inhabitants, having many mines, were very skilful at underground warfare. From there Crassus marched against the people of Bazas, who had attracted to them a large number of soldiers and officers who had served under Sertorius, and a good number of Spaniards. Contrary to barbarian practice, these stayed quiet in their camp, which was fortified in Roman style, waiting for hunger to compel the Romans to leave their land; but Crassus marched up and attacked. They fought valiantly but the rear of their position was poorly fortified and Crassus forced a way in. Three-quarters of them – around 50,000 - were slaughtered. The peoples of Bayonne, Berry, Armagnac, Bordeaux and Dax, appalled by this Roman victory, submitted.

The peoples of Thérouanne, Gueldre, Brabant and Boulonnais had never offered submission to Caesar; protected by their forests, they cherished their freedom. Although it was late in the season, Caesar, who had already formed the project of crossing the ocean in his next campaign, marched on Thérouanne and camped at the entrance to the forests; he was ill-received by the locals and only managed to compel their submission by felling and burning the woods. After this episode, which was not a complete success, he placed his troops in winter quarters and made his own way to Cisalpine Gaul. So ended the third campaign in Gaul.

V. Observations

1. One can only despise Caesar's treatment of the Senate of Vannes. This people had not revolted; they had provided hostages and promised to live quietly, but they were in possession of all their rights and liberties. They had indeed given Caesar grounds to make war against them, but not to violate the law of nations in their case and to misuse his victory in so atrocious a way. This conduct was not just; still less was it politic. Such means never achieve their aim; they anger and disgust the nations. The punishment of a few chief people is all that justice and policy permit; it is an important rule to treat prisoners well.

   The English broke this moral and political rule by placing French prisoners on hulks, which has made them hated throughout the continent.
2. Brittany, that large and difficult province, submitted without making efforts in proportion to its strength. The same applies to Aquitaine and Lower Normandy. This is due to causes which cannot be precisely determined, but it is easy to see that the main reason lay in the spirit of isolation and local loyalty which characterized the peoples of Gaul. At this time they had no national or even regional spirit; their loyalty was at the level of the town. This is the same spirit which has since forged the fetters of Italy. Nothing is more opposed to a national spirit, to general ideas of liberty, than the private spirit of family or village. Because of this fragmentation, it also followed that the Gauls had no trained standing army, therefore no knowledge of military science. If Caesar's glory depended solely on his conquest of Gaul, it would be in doubt.

   Any nation which lost sight of the importance of a standing army ever-ready for action, and which relied on mass levies or militias, would suffer the same fate as Gaul, although without even the glory of putting up a resistance as strong as theirs, which could be attributed to the barbarism of the time and to the nature of the terrain, covered with forests, marshes and quagmires and without roads: which made it difficult to conquer and easy to defend.

Chapter 4

Gallic War. Fourth campaign (55 BC)

I. German incursion into Belgium

The Suebi were the most powerful of the nations of Germany, divided into 100 cantons, each supplying 1,000 armed men who made war for one campaign and were replaced each year by others. They were wanderers, never staying more than a year in one locality, preferring to be surrounded by wilderness. They lived on milk, the meat from their flocks and the spoils of the chase. The men were strong and of tall stature; they dressed in skins and retained all the customs of tribal people reared in the empty wilderness.

Three years before, this nation had conquered the territory of the peoples of Berg and Zutphen, who, defeated, wandered through various lands before resolving to cross the Rhine at its mouth, numbering 450,000 souls. They took over the lands of Gueldre and Brabant and settled there in the winter of the year 56.[1] Fame exaggerated their strength and numbers, and several Gallic tribes already counted on them to help shake off the Roman yoke. Caesar made an early crossing of the mountains in order to march on them, and received envoys whom they sent as he approached their territory. They had no desire for war; driven from their country by unjust aggressors, they sought land where they could establish themselves and live in peace. Caesar refused their request and continued his march. As a force of 5,000 Gallic cavalry was approaching their camp, it was attacked and routed by 800 of these barbarians. After this exploit, which dispelled any doubts about their courage, the chiefs and elders came to the Roman camp as supplicants. Caesar had them arrested and disarmed. He then marched out at once, attacked and captured their camp. The remnants of these unfortunate peoples crossed back over the Rhine, in particular a large part of their cavalry which had not taken part in the battle.

II. Caesar crosses the Rhine

Caesar demanded that the peoples of the right bank of the Rhine should send back these cavalry on the grounds that they belonged to him, having formed part of an army which he had defeated. His demand was refused; this gave him a pretext, and he built a bridge on piles at Cologne and crossed the Rhine. His engineers drove two piles upstream, 2ft apart, and two downstream, 40ft from the first; these piles were 1½ft thick; they were connected by a beam 2ft thick which formed the pile cap. They used as many piles as the width of the river required. Planks and bundles of sticks formed the deck of the bridge, which was constructed in ten days, counting from when the materials arrived at the site. Caesar was welcomed on the right bank of the Rhine by the people of Cologne; but the Suebi took up arms, held a general assembly and showed great hostility. This led Caesar to cross back over the Rhine and to burn his bridge after spending eighteen days on the right bank and achieving nothing.

III. Invasion of Britain

From the Rhine, Caesar proceeded to the port of Boulogne: the fleet from Vannes had been assembled there. He embarked the Seventh and Tenth Legions on eighty transports and some galleys. He gathered his cavalry at the port of Étaples and loaded them onto eighteen large cargo ships. He dared to count on the good behaviour of the Gauls, seizing large numbers of hostages and leaving Sabinus in command of the army. He raised anchor at ten o'clock in the morning. He reached the shores of Britain, but at a place where there were high cliffs, so he gathered his convoy together and at three o'clock in the afternoon, when the tide was favourable, he raised anchor again, sailed along the coast for 7 miles and effected a landing on a flat and level beach. The inhabitants fiercely resisted the disembarkation but were beaten.

Commius, King of Arras, who had gone ahead of the Roman army to prepare the minds of the locals, was at first arrested and imprisoned, but later the barbarians, in fear, released him and placed him at the head of the envoys whom they sent to Caesar. They were granted peace on condition

of supplying hostages. Four days later, the eighteen ships carrying the cavalry came within sight of the coast, but greeted by a furious tempest, they became the playthings of the ocean. At full moon, high tides flooded Caesar's camp, especially the beach where his ships were drawn up, and these suffered much damage. These two unfortunate accidents, and especially the sight of how few Roman soldiers there were, gave heart to the local inhabitants. Recovered from their initial surprise and having had time to plan, they took up arms, surprised the Seventh Legion while it was foraging and surrounded it. The Tenth Legion came to its rescue. A few days later, the barbarians attacked the Roman camp in strength but were driven off. Caesar then embarked with his army and succeeded in reaching Gaul a few days before the equinox. The poor success of this expedition, like that on the right bank of the Rhine, drew sarcasm from his enemies at Rome. However, the Senate ordered twenty days of public thanksgiving.

IV. Observations

1. Both of the two incursions which Caesar undertook during this campaign were premature and unsuccessful. His conduct towards the peoples of Berg and Zutphen was contrary to the law of nations. In his memoirs, he seeks in vain to tone down the injustice of his conduct, and Cato condemned him for it. The victory over the peoples of Zutphen was in any case inglorious; when they crossed the Rhine, numbering about 450,000, this would have given them no more than 80,000 combatants, too few to hold their own against eight legions supported by auxiliaries and by Gaulish troops who had so much interest in the defence of their territory.
2. Plutarch lauds Caesar's bridge over the Rhine, which he considers a prodigous achievement; but it was an entirely unremarkable work which any modern army could construct just as easily.[2] He chose not to cross using a pontoon bridge, fearing Gaulish sabotage and the risk of rupture. He built a bridge on piles in ten days; he could have done so sooner. At Cologne the Rhine is 600 yards wide, but it was the season of the year when the river is at its lowest and it was probably then no wider than 500 yards. The bridge might have had fifty spans, which at five[3] piles per

span would require 250 piles; with six pile drivers he could have driven them all in six days. This is the most difficult part of the operation; the installation of the pile caps and construction of the bridge deck are much simpler tasks which can proceed at the same time as pile driving. Instead of positioning the five piles as he did, it would have been preferable to plant all five in a single line, spaced 3ft apart, surmounted by a pile cap 18–20ft long. This arrangement has the advantage that if one of the piles is washed away, the other four can continue to resist and support the bridge spans.

3. This is how the engineer Count Bertrand proceeded in 1809 on the Danube, 5 miles below Vienna in line with the island of Lobau. The Danube is an altogether different proposition to the Rhine. At the point in question, Europe's greatest river is 1,000 yards wide and 28ft deep. The Rhine at Cologne, when Caesar crossed, was less than 15ft deep. The French engineer built three piled bridges, driving 2,400 piles in twenty days. The Danube, at the Isle of Lobau, is divided by the island; the first branch was 550 yards wide, the island 100 yards and the second branch 350 yards: a total of 1,000 yards. The current was fastest in the smaller branch, which lay on the left bank. Over the larger branch he built forty-five spans, each of 12 yards. Each pier consisted of six piles crowned by a pile cap 20ft long. The piles were driven 10ft into the river bed and rose 6ft above the water level; they were 30–36ft long. Four small pile drivers were able to complete this work in ten days: each pile driver was mounted on a boat, and the pile hammer weighed 600lb. The pile caps were fixed with 18in iron bolts and spikes. The cross pieces and diagonal braces were morticed and bolted together. There were greater difficulties with the smaller branch where the current was extremely rapid; it would tear out a pile within an hour if it was left unsupported. It was necessary to attach it to the pile driver boat as soon as it was driven, until the second pile was installed and the two linked together. It was very difficult to insert the pile into the river bed; as soon as it touched down and the pile driving began, it shook with sufficient violence to cause havoc on the boat. It would have been impossible to drive the piles in the middle of the smaller branch with an ordinary piling rig; the engineer took from Vienna some pile drivers, each supported on

two boats, which were being used on the town's great bridge. If these pile drivers had been used from the start, the bridge over the smaller branch would have been completed in the same time as that over the larger branch, namely ten days. The bridge deck was loaded with heavy timber baulks in order to reduce the oscillation produced by the force of the current. The bridge was built in June: melting snow had raised the level of the Danube by 10-12ft; a month later, the construction of the bridge would have been easier. The piles were up to 50ft long.

During the same twenty-day period, General Bertrand constructed a further network of piles 60 yards upstream. He surmounted these with pile caps on which he built a deck, so forming a second bridge 8ft wide for use by infantry and cavalry. The piers consisted of only three piles.

Lastly, 1,200 yards further upstream, he installed a double line of piles over a distance of 1,600 yards to protect the two bridges. In addition, he built two piled bridges 100 yards long over a small branch of the river which traverses the Island of Lobau, and another of 120 yards between the island and the left bank of the river. The Island of Lobau was 3,600 yards wide. The work on these bridges was equivalent to at least ten times that undertaken by Caesar; yet it was completed in twenty days, from the moment the order was given; with a few more pile drivers, it could have been done in less than ten days. Caesar's bridge was built in ten days from the time when the materials arrived on site. The bridges over the Danube required 900 timbers 45-50ft long by 2ft square, 2,500 timbers of 35-40ft by 15-18in square and 9,000 planks 36ft long by 9in wide and 2in thick.

4. In addition Napoleon built a pontoon bridge 160 yards long as a single unit. The artillery bridging personnel constructed it using twenty-two pontoons in a branch of the river which was covered by an island. The twenty-two pontoons were linked together by beams, and a deck was added. On the night of the attack, the bridge was brought down the French bank of the river, moored at one end, and rotated so as to cross the river. Within a very few minutes it was moored to the far bank. The columns of infantry immediately charged across, to the great surprise and astonishment of the enemy, who had thought himself safe for another two hours.

Bridges assembled into a single unit ought to be developed further. It is not necessary to have possession of one branch of a river. At nightfall the drays can be brought to the river bank and the pontoons unloaded on sloping ground; inside two hours, a company of sappers can construct the bridge using screws, with no hammers and nails. The bridge should then be shifted into the water by the united effort of 400 or 500 men and immediately rotated to meet the opposite bank; the same instant, the column of infantry will deploy in strength.

Would it be possible to throw a bridge in a single unit across such rivers as the main branch of the Rhine or the main branch of the Danube with pontoons weighing 1,500lb? If it is possible, as one is inclined to believe, the bridge would have to be assembled in the water alongside the bank, again at night; the river being more than 400 yards wide, the enemy on the opposite bank will not be able to see what is happening. Experience will determine whether it is necessary to support the movement of the bridge using three or four boats anchored in midstream to stop it from breaking when it touches the far bank; or if it is considered that this is not necessary and that the system of assembly will be strong enough to withstand the shock, then some anchors could later be placed to resist the effect of the current on the centre of the bridge. In a few hours, between eight o'clock in the evening and midnight, the river would be bridged. A great achievement.

Sharpshooters can be positioned in the boats, who will open fire upstream and downstream as soon as the bridge begins to rotate across the river. One could even mount four-pounders on suitable supports, and a deck with a drawbridge on the foremost end.

5. Large cargo boats are better than anything else for constructing temporary bridges over large rivers in an army's rear area, as such boats taken up locally are generally large and well-built. However, pontoons are delicate objects to use for bridges thrown over rivers in the face of the enemy: they are vulnerable to accidental damage; they let in water, either as a result of drying out or by the effects of musket and cannon fire; and they will sink if subjected to too great a weight, whether from a bunched mass of infantry or from a close-packed group of heavy loads. Finally, they are transported on drays, which are the heaviest and most awkward

of all the vehicles in the artillery train as even the smallest are 18ft long and the ordinary pontoon has a length of up to 30ft. This brings the drawbacks, firstly that they are invariably recognized even though of all the artillery vehicles they are the ones which it is most important to conceal from enemy observation; and secondly that while it is essential that they be brought up to the river bank in silence so as not to alert the enemy on the far bank, this may entail the greatest difficulties since the approaches to rivers are often obstructed by marshes, lagoons and dikes.

6. In order to avoid these difficulties, it would therefore seem desirable to divide each pontoon into four floats, each 8 or 9ft long, the four being joined together by clamps and together having the same carrying capacity as a standard pontoon suitable for crossing large rivers. This would have the advantages, firstly that the floats would not weigh more than 500-600lb and so would be easy to handle; secondly that they could be carried on all sorts of vehicles, which an observer would be unable to distinguish from other artillery vehicles; and thirdly that each pontoon could be made up of two, three or four floats so one could be removed as necessary. A pontoon could consist of only two or three floats if there were not enough to use four.
7. These floats could be forced under water by several inches without endangering the bridge. These four floats, which replace a conventional pontoon, would only occupy half the volume of a pontoon; for out of the 155ft^3 occupied by a pontoon, 76ft^3 are for the part of the pontoon which is out of the water and which for safety's sake should never if possible be submerged. So four floats of copper or wood, each of 20ft^3 capacity, would do a better job than the current pontoon of 155ft^3.
8. Cork weighs 16lb per cubic foot, water 70lb; each cubic foot of cork can carry 54lb. A pontoon made of solid cork would weigh 1,600lb, would displace 100ft^3 and could carry 5,400lb; taking away 1,000lb for the weight of the deck, made of planks and beams, leaves 4,400lb, which is enough to carry campaign vehicles. If this cork pontoon were divided into four floats, each of 25ft^3, they would each weigh 400lb and could carry 1,350lb. What advantages would come from a bridge made in this way! It could never be sunk by the impact of foreign bodies, or bad weather, or cannon fire. It would have the proper characteristics of a

mechanism of war: durability, strength and simplicity. A bridge so constructed could have one, two, three, four, five or even six floats supporting each pier, according to the number available, the width of the river and the requirements of the task. The wagons carrying the floats would no longer need to come to the river bank; such floats could easily be carried by hand for 200 or 400 yards.

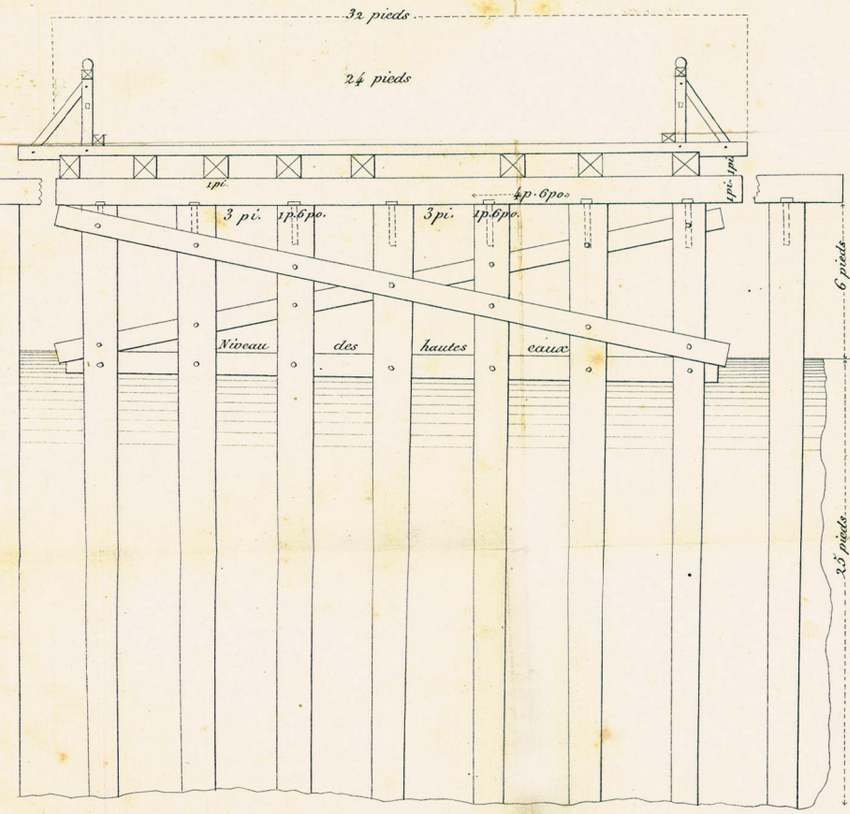
9. The Orientals use animal hides[4] for crossing rivers. An inflated hide has a volume of 9ft^3 and a surface area of 36ft^2 of hide weighing 18lb; ten of these inflated hides will weigh 180lb and can form a pier which will carry the same load as a copper pontoon. Thus one wagon could carry enough hides for ten piers, sufficient to bridge a river 60 yards wide. One might raise objections to the fragility of inflated hides, which can so easily be pierced, but the answer to this lies in the composition of the pier consisting of ten separate hide floats, leaving little grounds for concern.

    Twelve pounds of cork can form a belt which fits under the armpits, which will keep a man afloat such that he can use his firearm. Several such belts, with the equivalent number of cork shoes and waterproof trousers, should be supplied to each company of pontoon sappers, to assist them in placing pontoons and to increase their security when working in the water on bridge construction.[5]

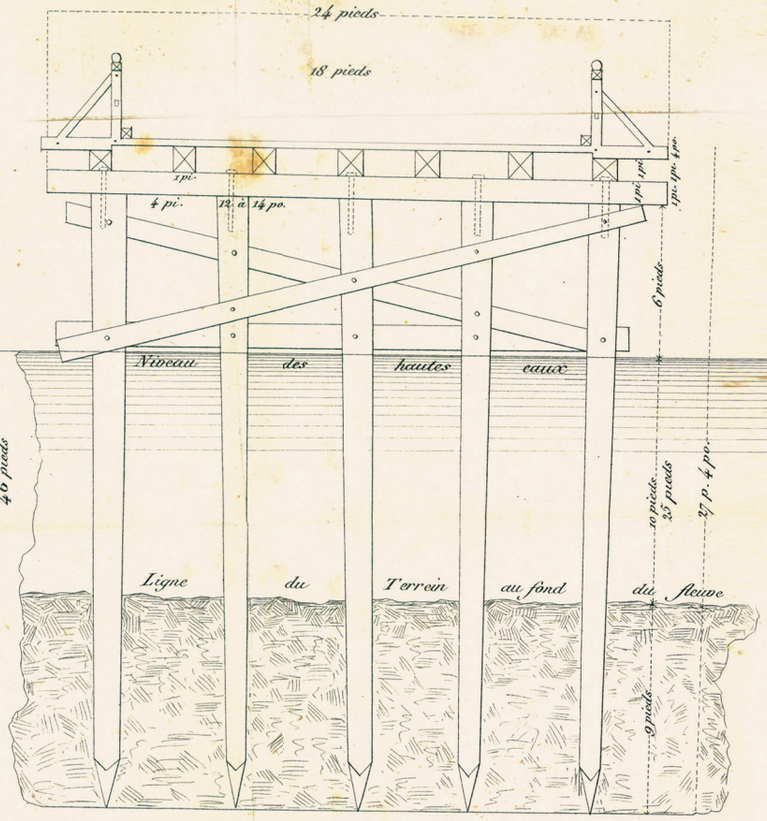
10. A goatskin belt, made up of six compartments together containing a cubic foot of air, fastened under the armpits, will keep a man afloat and weigh no more than ½lb. The division onto six compartments has the advantage that if one, two or even three are punctured, the other three will be sufficient to keep the man afloat. Belts of this kind, which will not hinder movement and weigh next to nothing, along with cork shoes and waterproof trousers, should be supplied as appropriate to selected sharpshooters so they can manoeuvre over lakes, rivers and ditches, and should also be issued in suitable numbers to each company of infantry. It is most important to have a large number of good swimmers in every company of cavalry and infantry.
11. Caesar failed in his incursion into Germany since he did not obtain either the handover of the cavalry of the defeated army, or an act of submission by the Suebi, who continued to defy him. He also failed in his

incursion into Britain. Two legions were too few; he should have had at least four, and he also had no cavalry, an indispensable arm in a country like Britain. He had failed to make sufficient preparation for an expedition of this importance; it ended in confusion, and it was put down to his good fortune that he was able to withdraw without loss.

Elévation d'une pile du petit bras.

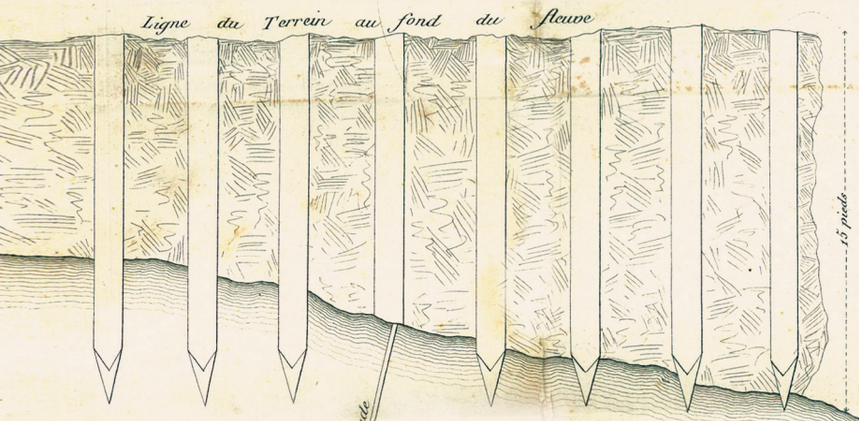


Elevation d'une pile du grand bras.

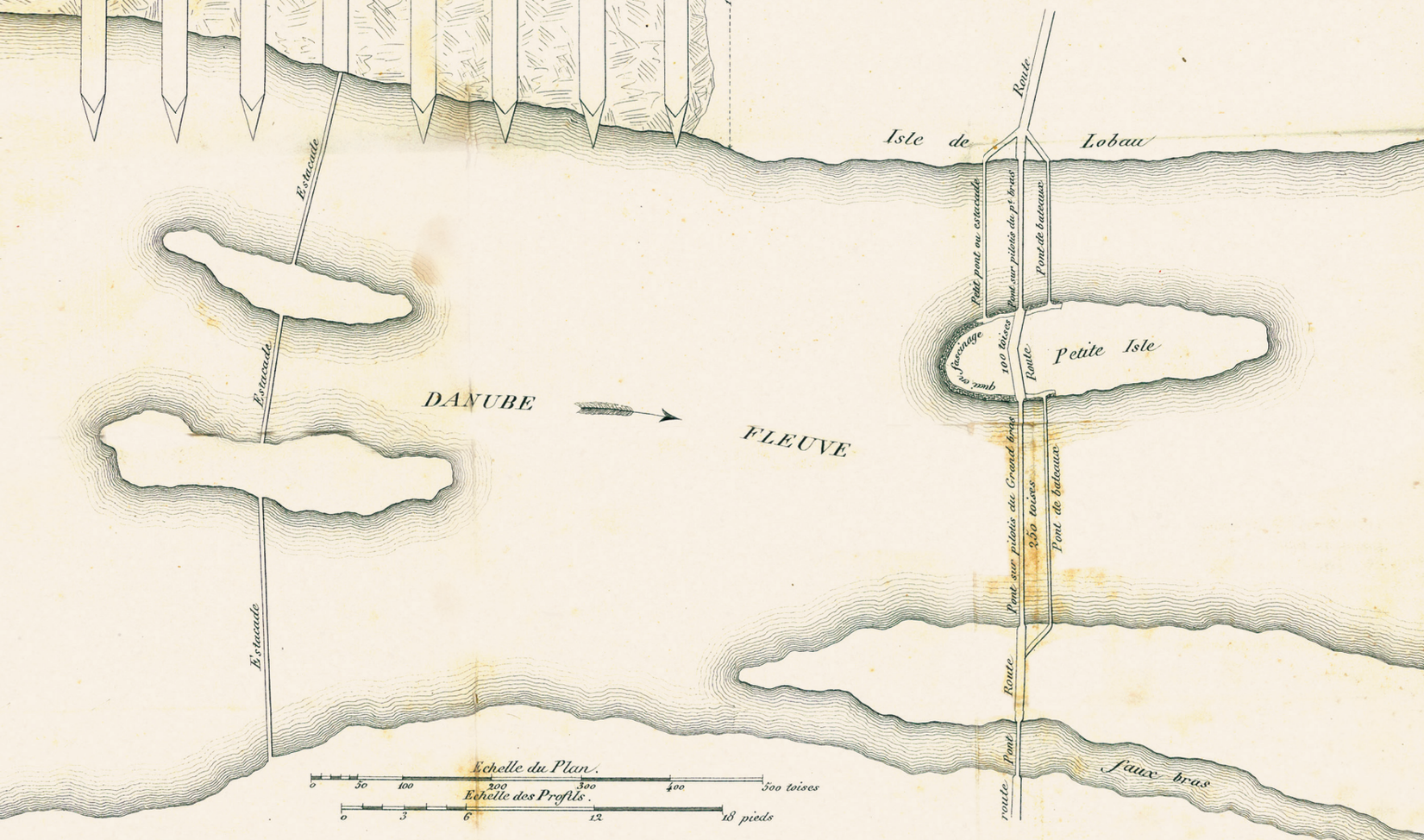


Vue des ponts sur pilotis Construits sur le Danube vis-à-vis l'isle de Lobau.

Isle



PLAN DES PONTS CONSTRUITS SUR LE DANUBE
vis-à-vis l'isle de Lobau.



Chapter 5

Gallic War. Fifth campaign (54 BC)

I. Second invasion of Britain

Over the winter, Caesar went to Illyria, where the Pirustae were attacking the frontiers; but on his arrival, these peoples sent ambassadors to him, paid for the damage they had done and gave hostages.

The people of Trèves were split into two factions under Indutiomarus and Cingetorix; the latter was loyal to Rome. When Caesar approached at the head of six legions, the people submitted and gave him 200 hostages.

Twenty-eight galleys and 600 cargo ships were in readiness on the coast of the Pas-de-Calais for Caesar's second invasion of Britain; forty, which were on their way from the Belgian ports to the rendezvous point, were struck by bad weather and scattered over the North Sea. Caesar embarked five legions and 2,000 horse, leaving Labienus with three legions and 2,000 horse to guard the coast and oversee the Gauls in his absence.

Caesar hoisted anchor at sunset, benefiting from a south-west wind which dropped at midnight, and landed on the same beach as in the previous year. The barbarians, alarmed at the sight of so large a fleet, did not oppose the landing; they were encamped 10 miles inland. Caesar marched on them and overcame them, but as he was preparing to follow up this success, he was recalled to his landing place to repair the damage which a storm had inflicted on his fleet: forty ships had sunk and almost every vessel was damaged to some extent. It took ten days to repair his ships, and during this time he surrounded his camp with a good entrenchment, drawing all his ships onto the shore.

Meanwhile, Cassivellaunus, who reigned over the left bank of the Thames, had been appointed by the Britons to command their army. He approached the Roman camp, leading to several battles in which he was beaten, driven across the Thames and pursued. Caesar crossed the river in strength and

captured the capital of Cassivellaunus, which was nothing but a fortified forest, a far cry from today's London. He appointed Mandubratius to rule over the peoples of the counties of Essex and Middlesex. This young man had visited Caesar in Gaul to seek his protection against the enemies of his house who had killed his father. During this time, the people of the county of Kent attacked the Roman camp which guarded the fleet, but were repulsed. Meanwhile, the autumn equinox was approaching and the Romans decided to return to Gaul.

Caesar tells us that the houses of these islanders are similar to those of the Gauls; that they have many cattle; that their money is of copper or iron; that there are tin mines in the interior and a few iron mines on the coast; that no fir or beech trees are to be found there; that they are forbidden to eat chickens, hares or geese; that the climate is milder than that of Gaul; that they do not sow seeds; that they live on milk and the flesh of their herds; that they paint their bodies sea-green; that they grow their hair long and shave the entire body apart from the head and upper lip; and that a woman there is shared by ten or twelve brothers or close relatives.

II. Sabinus' legion is slaughtered by the people of Liège

The harvest had been bad and food was scarce in Gaul, leading Caesar to spread out his winter quarters: he placed one legion in Thérouanne, one in Hainault under the command of Cicero,[1] one in Normandy, one at Reims, three commanded by Labienus in Belgium, and the Eighth and five other cohorts in the neighbourhood of Liège, near Tongres, between the Meuse and the Rhine, under the command of Sabinus. The Gauls were restless and Caesar thought it necessary to remain in the province over the winter. A lord of Chartres descended from the local kings, whom Caesar had put in charge to reward his loyalty to Rome, was publicly assassinated by his countrymen. The Gauls did not like kings imposed on them by foreigners. Fifteen days after Sabinus had fortified his camp, Ambiorix and Catuvolcus, rulers of Liège, attacked and were repulsed. Ambiorix then managed to persuade Sabinus that all the Gauls were in revolt and were now attacking the various winter quarters of the Romans, that in two days Germans would arrive in great numbers and that Sabinus must therefore withdraw without

a moment to lose. Sabinus believed this and left camp at daybreak, but he was soon surrounded by the barbarians and his fifteen cohorts were entirely wiped out with no survivors. In the final moments, the Roman soldiers killed each other so as not to fall victim to the cruelty of their enemies.

III. Cicero is besieged in his camp by the people of Hainault

After this feat, Ambiorix led his army to Namur and then to Hainault, persuading the Gauls on the way to revolt. Everywhere they took up arms. Soon his army was swollen by the soldiers of Courtrai, Bruges, Louvain, Tournai and Ghent, and he then attacked Cicero's camp. Some soldiers who were outside the camp gathering wood were massacred, but the others took up their weapons and repulsed the barbarian assault. Cicero spent all night building 120 towers from the timber which he had in the camp. The enemy attacked again the following day and filled up the ditch, but were again driven off. This was repeated for seven days. Then the Gauls built a line of contravallation consisting of a rampart 11ft high and a ditch 15ft wide.[2] They had no tools; they cut turves with their swords and carried earth in their hands or with their garments. These lines, which were 12 miles around, were completed in three hours. Over the following days, they built towers and prepared grappling hooks and siege shelters, all in imitation of Roman practice. When a strong wind blew, they hurled fire pots and incendiary darts into the camp, setting it on fire. They immediately launched a further attack, but without success; they brought one tower up to the rampart but Cicero burnt it.

Finally, a Gaulish slave reached Caesar with a letter. Caesar was then at Amiens; he gathered two legions and hurried to the rescue of his lieutenant. A Gaulish cavalryman tied a letter from Caesar to his javelin and threw it into Cicero's camp; it struck a tower, remained there for two days and was only discovered on the third. As soon as the besiegers were informed that the Romans were on the march, they raised the siege and, 60,000 strong, marched to meet them. Caesar, having only 7,000 men, thought it prudent to halt, build a fortification and remain shut up in his camp. Emboldened, the barbarians attacked, whereupon the Romans sallied out through every gate and put them to flight. Caesar joined Cicero the same day. When he

reviewed Cicero's legion, nine out of ten men were found to be wounded. From there Caesar returned to his winter quarters in Amiens. All of Gaul was in uproar. The inhabitants of Sens, dissatisfied with a king given to them by Caesar, tried to kill him and rejected Caesar's authority. Only the peoples of Autun and Reims remained loyal.

IV. Indutiomarus, king of the people of Trèves, is killed

Indutiomarus of Trèves invited the peoples of Germany to cross the Rhine. He told them that the best of the Roman troops had been destroyed and that the Germans must come to support the Gauls. Supported by the peoples of Namur, Hainault, Chartres and Liège, he took the field and attacked the legion of Labienus, who was encamped in a favourable position. Labienus put up with the insults of the barbarians for several days, but once he had received cavalry reinforcements sent by loyal allies, he made a sortie, defeated the enemy and killed Indutiomarus. This made Gaul a little quieter.

V. Observations

1. Caesar's second expedition to Britain had no better outcome than the first, since he did not leave behind any garrison or establishment, and the Romans were no more masters of the place afterwards than before.
2. The massacre of Sabinus' legions was the first major setback experienced by Caesar in Gaul.
3. For more than a month, Cicero with only 5,000 men held out against an army ten times larger in a fortified camp which he had begun only fifteen days before: would it be possible to achieve a similar result today?

   Our soldiers are as strong and vigorous as the ancient Romans; our pioneer tools are the same; we have one additional agent, namely gunpowder. So we can raise ramparts, dig ditches, fell trees, build towers as well and as quickly as them. But modern offensive weapons have a quite different power, and operate in a quite different manner, to the offensive weapons of the ancients.

   The Romans owed their continual success to the practice, from which they never departed, of spending every night in a fortified camp,

and of never giving battle without having in their rear a fortified camp to serve as a place of retreat and to contain their stores, their baggage and their wounded. The nature of the weapons in these times was such that in their camps they were protected against the attacks not only of an army of equal size, but even of a superior army; they were thus in a position to decide whether to fight or to await a more favourable occasion. Marius is assailed by a host of Cimbri and Teutones; he shuts himself in his camp, remains there until the day when circumstances are favourable, then he sallies forth hand-in-hand with Victory. When Caesar arrives near Cicero's camp, the Gauls abandon the latter and march to meet the former. The Gauls are four times more numerous. Caesar takes up position, in a few hours fortifies his camp, and there patiently accepts the insults and provocations of an enemy whom he does not yet wish to fight. But before long a fine opportunity arises; he then sallies forth through every gate and the Gauls are vanquished.

Why has so wise a practice, one so productive of splendid outcomes, been abandoned by modern generals? Because the nature of offensive weapons has changed. Bladed weapons were the principal weapons of the ancients: with his short sword, the legionary conquered the world; with the Macedonian pike, Alexander conquered Asia. The principal weapon of modern armies is the projectile weapon, the gun, that weapon so superior to anything invented by mankind: no defensive device can mitigate its effect. Shields, coats of mail and breastplates have been recognized as useless, and abandoned. With this fearsome machine, a soldier can kill or wound sixty men in a quarter of an hour; he need never lack cartridges, since they each weigh less than an ounce,[3] the ball will travel 1,000 yards, it is dangerous at 240 yards and most deadly at 180 yards.

Since the principal weapon of the ancients was the sword or the pike, they habitually formed up in depth. The legion and the phalanx, however they were attacked – whether in front, on the right flank or on the left flank – could respond in any direction without disadvantage. They could camp on a small area, which minimized the labour of fortifying the perimeter as well as the required size of the guard detachment. A consular army, reinforced by light troops and auxiliaries, amounting

to 24,000 infantry and 1,800 cavalry – in all nearly 30,000 men – could camp in a square of 660 yards on a side, with a perimeter of 2,688 yards, equivalent to eleven men per yard. Each man carried three stakes, or thirty-three stakes per running yard. The area of the camp was 440,000 square yards,[4] fifteen square yards per man; taking just two-thirds of the men (enough for seven men per yard), by each working for three hours at most,[5] they could fortify their camp and put it beyond danger.

Since the main weapon of modern armies is the projectile weapon, they have to deploy in thin formations so that all their projectile weapons can be brought into play at once. As these weapons are effective at long ranges, modern armies derive their main advantage from the position which they occupy; if they dominate or outflank the enemy army, or exceed it in extent, they increase their effectiveness. A modern army must thus avoid being outflanked, surrounded or invested. It must occupy a camp with a front as wide as its line of battle itself; if it occupied a square area with a front insufficient for its deployment, it could be surrounded by an army of equal strength and exposed to all the fire of its projectile weapons, which would converge upon it and reach every point in the camp, without being able to respond to so terrible a fire with more than a fraction of its own firepower. In this position, it could be beaten, despite its ramparts, by an army of equal strength or even an inferior army. The modern camp can only be defended by the army itself, and in the army's absence it cannot be guarded by a mere detachment.

The army of Miltiades at Marathon, or that of Alexander at Arbela, or that of Caesar at Pharsalus, would not be able to hold the field against a modern army of equal strength. The latter, having an extended order of battle, would overlap the two wings of the Greek or Roman army; its musketeers would rain death on its front and flanks, for the light-armed troops, recognizing the inadequacy of their arrows and slingshot, would abandon their posts to take refuge behind the heavy-armed troops, who then, sword or pike in hand, would charge forward to engage the fusiliers hand-to-hand. However, at a range of 240 yards they would be greeted on three sides by a volley fire which would cause chaos and so weaken those brave and intrepid legionaries that they would not withstand the

charge of several battalions in close column, which would then march on them with bayonets fixed. If on the battlefield there is a wood or a mountain, how will the legion or the phalanx be able to resist the swarm of sharpshooters who will be placed there? Even in bare plains there are villages, houses, farms, cemeteries, walls, ditches, hedges; and if there are none, it will take no great genius to create obstacles and halt the legion or the phalanx under the murderous fire which will quickly destroy it.

No mention has been made of the sixty or eighty fiery mouths which make up the artillery of the modern army, which will cut through the legion or phalanx from right to left, from left to right, from front to rear, vomiting death at a range of 1,000 yards. The soldiers of Alexander or of Caesar, the heroes of Athenian liberty or of Rome, will flee in disorder, abandoning the field of battle to these demigods armed with the thunderbolts of Jove. The Romans were almost always beaten by the Parthians because the Parthians were all armed with a projectile weapon superior to those of the light-armed troops of the Roman army, such that the shields of the legionaries could not resist it. The legionaries, armed with their short sword, succumbed to a shower of missiles to which they could offer no reply, having only javelins (the *pilum*). After these dismal ordeals, the Romans provided each legionary with five javelins (or *hasta*), 3ft long, which he stowed in the hollow of his shield.

A consular army closed up in its camp, attacked by a modern army of equal strength, would be driven out without an assault and without coming to cold steel. It would not be necessary to fill in the ditches or scale the ramparts. Surrounded on every side by the attacking army, overlapped, enveloped and pierced by fire, the camp would be the focus of all the shots, all the cannon balls, all the bullets; fire, devastation and death would open the gates and bring down the ramparts. A modern army, placed in a Roman camp, could no doubt at first bring all its artillery into play; but, though equal to the artillery of the besieger, it would be taken in flank and promptly reduced to silence. Only a part of the infantry would be able to use their muskets; they would be firing from a line of limited length and would be far from producing an effect equal to the harm they sustained. Fire from the centre to the circumference is insignificant; fire from the circumference to the centre is irresistible.

A modern army of equal strength to a consular army would have twenty-six battalions of 840 men, making up 21,840 infantry; forty-two squadrons of cavalry, amounting to 5,040 men; and ninety artillery pieces served by 2,500 men. The modern order of battle, being more extended, requires a larger number of cavalry to support the wings and reconnoitre the front. In battle, this army, arranged in three lines – of which the first would be equal to the other two combined – would occupy a front 3,000 yards wide by 1,000 yards in depth. The camp would have a perimeter of 9,000 yards, three times that of the consular equivalent; there would be only three men per yard of perimeter, but 100 square yards of area per man: the entire army would be needed to guard it. It would be hard to find so large a tract of land not overlooked by high ground within cannon shot: the placing of most of the artillery of the besieging army at such a point would quickly destroy the field fortifications of the camp. All these considerations have led modern generals to renounce the system of fortified camps by resorting instead to well-chosen natural positions.

A Roman camp could be sited without regard to local conditions. Anywhere was suitable for armies whose entire power lay in cold steel; establishing a good camp required no eye for country or military genius. Whereas today, the choice of position and the manner of occupying it and of positioning the different units so as to make best use of the terrain is part and parcel of the art of the modern commander.

Modern army tactics are based on two principles: first, that they must occupy a front which allows them to make effective use of all their projectile weapons; second, that the advantage of occupying positions which dominate, overlap or outflank the enemy's lines is greatly preferred to the advantage of being protected by a ditch, a parapet or any other species of field fortification.

The nature of the weapons in use determines the composition of armies, of plans of campaign, marches, positions, encampments, battle orders and the design of fortified places, and this produces a continual contrast between the ancient and the modern systems of war. Ancient weapons called for deep formations, modern weapons for shallow deployment; the former for prominent strongpoints with towers and

high walls, the latter for places built flush with the ground, protected by *glacis* of earth which mask the masonry; the former for compact camps where men, animals and stores can be brought together as if in a town, the latter for extended positions.

Suppose a general of today was told: 'Like Cicero you will have 5,000 men, sixteen cannon, 5,000 entrenching tools and 5,000 sandbags; you will be close to a forest in ordinary country; in fifteen days you will be attacked by an army of 60,000 men with 120 cannon; you will only be rescued eighty or ninety-six hours after being attacked.' What defensive works, on what layout and with what profile, could art propose? Can the skill of the engineer uncover secrets which will satisfy this problem?[6]

Chapter 6

Gallic War. Sixth campaign (53 BC)

I. War against Sens, Chartres, Trèves and Liège

Caesar raised two new legions in Italy and Pompey gave him another, which made good his losses and even enlarged his army, now ten legions strong.

The death of Indutiomarus had not put an end to his faction, which was dominant at Trèves. This people, in league with those of Hainault, Namur, Gueldre, Sens and Chartres, as well as several German nations which were to cross the Rhine, rose in revolt. Without awaiting the end of winter, Caesar led four legions into Hainault, obliging the inhabitants to give hostages. He summoned the nations of Gaul to assemble at Paris instead of Sens, but the confederates failed to attend. He marched against the people of Sens and then those of Chartres; both sought his mercy and supplied hostages. He entered Gueldre and Trèves with six legions divided into three corps, ravaging and burning the country. The people submitted. Labienus, being in the land of Trèves with three legions, pretended to be afraid, broke camp and was pursued with enthusiasm by the inhabitants, but on reaching an advantageous position he turned on them and routed them entirely. The whole country of Trèves was handed over to Cingetorix, the supporter of Rome. The Germans had already crossed the Rhine but returned home upon hearing of the defeat of their Gallic allies.

II. Second crossing of the Rhine

Caesar followed them and built a bridge over the Rhine near Cologne, a little upstream of the place where he had done so previously.[1] Upon his approach, the Suebi withdrew to the midst of the swamps and forests beyond the mountains of Thuringia. The Romans did not care to venture

into such wild country, and after a few days they crossed back onto the left bank. They built a four storey tower – on the left bank – with a twelve-cohort garrison to keep watch on the barbarians. They destroyed 60 yards of the bridge at the right bank, so much did they acknowledge the courage of these people. It seems that in these times there was a transmigration of peoples from the great wastelands into Germany.

Caesar says:

> 'Formerly the Gauls were braver than the Germans and would cross the Rhine to establish colonies on the right bank; but since they have become soft, the Germans are so much the braver that there is no comparison. The Germans do not have druids or human sacrifice; their gods are the sun and the moon; they pass their time in hunting and warfare; they esteem men who are slow to develop beards; they only live with women after the age of 20; they have no fixed abode; for them it is an honour to be surrounded by empty wasteland, which they regard as a tribute to their valour. Every army and every tribe elects its own chief. The law of hospitality is sacred to them. The Black Forest is nine days' march across; it stretches from Speyer to the Swiss frontier; some Germans say they have marched for sixty days without finding where it ends; it harbours animals which are found nowhere else.'

Caesar also says:

> 'The only people who are respected in Gaul are the druids and the nobles. The common people are like slaves; they are never consulted, laden with taxes and oppressed by the great. The druids conduct sacrifices, bring up the young, give judgement on civil and criminal matters; they can ban someone from attending sacrifices, which is a form of excommunication much feared. They have only one chief, who is elected at an assembly held in the territory of Chartres. Druids do not go to war, pay no taxes and are exempted from every imposition. They must learn by heart a great quantity of verses which must not be written down; they believe in

the immortality of the soul and in its transmigration. The Gauls are superstitious. The druids make human sacrifices to appease the gods; they prefer thieves, failing which anyone will do; they worship Jupiter, Apollo, Mercury, Mars and Minerva. Children never appear before their father until they have borne arms. The importance of the nobles is determined by the number of their armed followers; they are all warriors.'

III. Caesar pursues Ambiorix in vain

After crossing back over the Rhine, Caesar crossed the forest of the Ardennes in pursuit of Ambiorix, who eluded him. Catuvolcus, the colleague of Ambiorix, who had contributed so much to the disaster of Sabinus, being aged, poisoned himself with yew, not wishing either to fall into the hands of the Romans or to endure the hardships of a wandering life. Caesar assembled all his baggage in the camp at Tongres, the same place where the catastrophe of Sabinus had taken place the previous year; the remains of his camp were there still. There he left the Fourteenth Legion and 600 horse under Cicero; he sent three legions to Namur, three into Brabant and set out with the rest in pursuit of Ambiorix, who had hidden himself in the furthest parts of the Forest of the Ardennes. But wishing to satisfy his vengeance against the people of Liège, he invited all the neighbouring peoples to come and pillage their territory. Several thousand Germans hastened to join in, attracted by the prospect of pillage; but having learnt, as they were returning home, that Cicero was guarding the treasures of the army with a single legion, they marched to his camp to attack it. When they arrived, five cohorts were out foraging 3 miles from the camp; they were cut off, only half were able to make good their escape and the rest were killed. Cicero's camp was exposed, and he would have been overcome if Caesar's cavalry had not arrived the next day on its way back from the pursuit of Ambiorix. The Germans crossed back over the Rhine. Despite his efforts over several months and his harsh treatment of the people, Caesar's hatred was impotent and Ambiorix escaped his clutches. Finally, after placing his army into winter quarters at Trèves, Langres and Sens, he left Gaul and went to Lombardy.

IV. Observation

Caesar's second crossing of the Rhine had no better result than the first. He left behind no trace of his presence in Germany; he did not even dare to establish a fortress in the form of a bridgehead. Everything he tells us about this country and the strange ideas which he has of it, shows to what extreme of barbarity this part of the world was then reduced, which is now so civilized. Likewise, he only has the vaguest ideas about Britain.

Chapter 7

Gallic War. Seventh campaign (52 BC)

I. General revolt of the Gauls

The Romans no longer concealed their ambition of reducing Gaul to a province; in every town they had a faction which they sought by every means to render dominant. The Gauls shuddered to behold the dangers which threatened their liberty. In previous years, Caesar had recognized their extreme discontent. He had taken large numbers of hostages, a largely ineffective policy since the needs of the service brought many Roman legionary officers into the towns, and at the moment of insurrection they became hostages themselves. At the beginning of the year 52, rebellion broke out on every side. The people of Chartres gave the signal; they entered Orléans and massacred the Roman officers, including the head of the army commissariat, who had been guilty of exactions. The people of Auvergne learned of this the same day through cries relayed by men placed at intervals along the road.

Vercingetorix, a young lord of Clermont, placed himself at the head of the rebels. At first he was driven out of the town as a young fool who was putting everyone's safety at risk; but soon after he raised an army, returned in force to Clermont and was proclaimed king. The peoples of Paris, Anjou and Touraine rallied to his banners. He crossed the Loire and raised rebellion in Berry: he had been secretly invited there by the inhabitants, who had sent a false appeal for help to their allies, the people of Autun. These despatched a formation of cavalry, but when it reached the Loire the officer in command, learning of the private sentiments of the inhabitants, withdrew. Caesar hastened to the scene from Cisalpine Gaul; he first went to Narbonne. It was midwinter. He crossed the Cevennes and the Vivarais and entered the Auvergne. Vercingetorix hastened to defend his country. Already Caesar had reached Vienne and Langres, where his legions were. He placed himself at their head, entered Bourbonnais, approached Orléans,

crossed the Loire, invested the town, took it, burnt it and killed the inhabitants. He then entered Berry, besieged and took Neuvy and began a siege of Bourges, the capital.

II. Siege of Bourges

It was early in the year and the weather was wet. Bourges was surrounded by marshes. Vercingetorix, losing hope of prevailing through battle, ordered the burning of every town and village, every granary and harvest in the province in order to starve the Roman army. In a single day, twenty towns[1] were consumed by flames. However, the people of Bourges, a large, wealthy and populous place, refused to burn their town and undertook to defend it. Caesar invested the place, protecting his camp with double lines of circumvallation and contravallation in the part of the town not covered by marshes, and began siege operations. Vercingetorix at the head of a large army, encamped 12 miles away, threatening Caesar's convoys and the circumvallation. In twenty-five days, the Romans constructed a terrace 330ft wide by 80ft high,[2] which dominated the walls of the town. Vercingetorix sent in across the marshes a reinforcement of 10,000 men and advanced with his cavalry to support a sortie by those besieged. Caesar thought this a favourable opportunity to capture the Gaulish camp, and marched to it. The soldiers demanded the order to attack, but it was too well fortified by nature and by artifice. Caesar returned to his lines, having achieved nothing.

Meanwhile, the besieged, supported by Vercingetorix, made a sortie; they fought with fury but were driven back. Soon after, Caesar mounted an assault, entered the place, burnt it, pillaged it and slaughtered 40,000 men. Only 800 escaped. This success seemed likely to bring about the collapse of the Gaulish resistance, but it proved otherwise; it raised their spirits and the resistance was entirely united. The chief of the people of Agen, allies of the Roman people, abandoned them and himself led a considerable force into the Gaulish camp. Vercingetorix was accused of treason in the national assembly, but defended himself with success. He argued that he had advised that Bourges be burnt because it was impossible to resist the Roman prowess at siege warfare. He emerged from this dispute more powerful and more respected than ever. During the siege of Bourges, the Roman army had

suffered from scarcity of food; it had lacked bread and was obliged to eat meat. But in Bourges it found substantial stocks of food. It was the start of spring, and the return of mild weather aided Caesar's hunt for fugitives, who had taken refuge amongst their marshes and forests.

III. Siege of Clermont

After the siege of Bourges, Caesar sent Labienus with four legions to the Seine while he led six legions into the Auvergne, crossed the Allier in the face of Vercingetorix and camped before Clermont. The Gaulish army had preceded him and occupied the heights. Meanwhile, the army of Autun, led by Litavicus, had declared against the Romans and marched to the aid of Clermont. Caesar went to meet it with four legions, found it 20 miles from his camp, resorted to negotiations and managed to persuade this army to return to Autun. Litavicus and his senior officers hurried to Clermont. Meanwhile, the people of Autun, as soon as they heard of the insurrection by Litavicus, had killed all the Romans in their territory and seized all the stores of the Roman traders, but they submitted once they learned what had happened to Litavicus, and excused themselves as best they could. Against this background, a Roman attack on Clermont was unsuccessful. The troops tried to advance further than their general wished and they suffered significant losses, leading Caesar to lift the siege.

IV. Revolt of Autun

Upon hearing this news, the people of Autun took counsel: 'It is shameful for us,' said they, 'not to make common cause with the rest of the Gauls who are fighting for their liberty.' One of their towns was Nevers, where the Roman army had placed the Gaulish hostages, as well as its stores, treasury, baggage and remount horses. They seized the lot, taking the hostages to Autun, where Litavicus made a triumphal entry. The Senate of Autun concluded a treaty with Vercingetorix. All the Roman traders were arrested, and the people of Autun burnt all the towns which they could not defend, including Nevers.

Caesar was left with only two choices, to take revenge or return to the Roman province: the second course would have lost everything, but the first

was full of hazard. After several days of forced marches, he forded the Loire and headed for Sens.

Labienus had marched on Paris; the Parisians had raised an army under the command of Camulogenus, a Gaul from Maine, who, though elderly, had a great military reputation. He was encamped behind the marsh which protected Paris. Labienus sought to cross the marsh but encountered such difficulties that he gave up. He withdrew and marched to Melun: this town is situated on an island in the Seine, where he found fifty boats, carried his troops across the river and returned to Paris following the right bank. The Gauls then set fire to Paris, broke the bridges and camped on the other bank, opposite Labienus. They knew that Caesar had failed at Clermont, that the people of Autun had revolted and the sacred cause of Gaul was finally prevailing. Labienus then resolved to rejoin Caesar. He brought his fifty boats to a point two miles downstream of Paris near Auteuil, crossed the Seine and camped on the heights of Vaugirard. Meanwhile, the Parisian army marched down the left bank and found itself facing the Romans. The two armies came to blows, the Seventh Legion smashing in one wing of the Parisians. Camulogenus did all he could to achieve victory but he could not resist the Roman onslaught; he died gloriously. This victory opened the way for Labienus to proceed to Sens, where he joined Caesar.

The people of Autun, proud of their strength, sought for themselves the direction of the war and the high command, but the national assembly of the Gauls was opposed to their wishes: Vercingetorix was confirmed in command. He raised 15,000 cavalry and repeated the order to burn everything in order to starve the Romans. He sent 10,000 men and 800 horse to attack Savoie and Dauphiné, countries which had been annexed to the Roman province, and an army of men from Auvergne and Languedoc to ravage the frontiers of the Roman province from Languedoc; the province was defended by twenty-two Roman cohorts. During this time, Caesar received a reinforcement of German cavalry, few in number but fine soldiers. He moved to Langres so as to be within reach of the Roman province, now under attack from all sides. Vercingetorix followed him with a large army and attacked Caesar while on the march, but although Caesar barely had time to place his baggage between the legions and form his line of battle, Vercingetorix was beaten and obliged to return to his camp. Afraid of being

overrun there, he withdrew to Alesia, a strong place in Burgundy, in the Auxois region, near Mont-Bard, a place destined to become famous: it was here that the destiny of Gaul would be decided.

V. Siege of Alesia. Capture of Vercingetorix

Caesar followed him and invested the town and the Gaulish army with a contravallation[3] 11 miles[4] long. Alesia is located on a steep hill; at its foot was a plain 3 miles long. All the approaches were blocked by hills. The Roman contravallation was protected by twenty-three forts. Several cavalry encounters took place during the construction of the lines, mostly to the detriment of the Gauls. When Vercingetorix saw that the lines were about to be completed, he dismissed his cavalry, which he was unable to feed, ordering every man to return home and enlist his countrymen to take up arms and come to the rescue of Alesia and their general. He then entered the town with his infantry, 80,000 strong. As soon as Caesar had completed his contravallation, he set to work building lines of circumvallation. He dug three ditches, one with a flat bottom 20ft wide and 20ft deep, the other two 15ft by 15ft, and filled the inner ditch – which was at the foot of the heights – with water from the river. He erected a 12ft-high rampart topped with a crenelated parapet, having at its foot an obstacle consisting of forked tree trunks and lined with towers 80ft apart. He continued to work on these lines throughout the siege and added numerous obstacles such as hidden pits containing spikes and felled trees with sharpened branches, to which his soldiers gave a variety of names. It thus appears that these devices were new to them. The line of circumvallation was 12 miles long.

Meanwhile, the assembly of the Gauls had resolved to raise an army of 200,000 men to relieve Alesia. Autun provided 35,000 men (the Marquisate of Suse formed part of its territory); Gevaudan and Velay (part of the Auvergne) supplied a further 35,000; Franche-Comté, Saintonge, Rouergue and Chartres supplied 12,000 men; Beauvais, 10,000; Paris and Soissons, 8,000 men each, and so on. The people of Beauvais refused to send their contingent to join the rest, saying they would make war on the Romans in their own way. Commius of Arras was appointed to command this great army; he had been a favourite of Caesar but had given in to the Gaulish

spirit. The same sentiments had prevailed among Caesar's other friends, and only the people of Reims remained faithful to him.

The time available for the relief of the town having expired,[5] food became scarce in Alesia. Morale was low. Some wished to surrender, others to pierce the Roman lines by a vigorous sortie before they became weakened by famine.

Then Critognatus, a brave and respected man, spoke out:

> 'To surrender is to accept slavery; to try to break through the Roman army is to prefer death to suffering; it is also cowardice, for we will lose our lives but we shall have abandoned the cause of Gaul; the great relieving force cannot be long arriving and it will have no chance of victory if it finds us dead. We have no news of our army – but does not Caesar give you news of it every day? If he was not aware of its approach, would he be adding ever more obstacles to his line of circumvallation? What did our ancestors do when the Cimbri and Teutones invaded? They killed all those too old to fight and consumed their corpses. That is the example we should imitate.'

The old men, women and children were driven out of the town, but the besiegers refused to admit them. A few days later, Commius finally appeared on the heights, 500 paces from the Roman camp, his cavalry flooding the plain. The cries of joy of the besieged echoed to the heavens. They came out from their walls, filled the ditches and pits with bundles of wood and hurdles, and vigorously attacked the contravallation. Meanwhile, the Gaulish cavalry was beaten after a bitter fight; this victory was due to the courage of Caesar's German cavalry. In the town, the initial joy gave way to consternation. The next day, the Gaulish infantry attacked the line of circumvallation. At this signal, Vercingetorix sallied out of the town, but the combined efforts were in vain. The strength of Caesar's lines, the great numbers of his towers and machines, the discipline and bravery of the Romans saved the day. Vercingetorix had managed to fill in the ditches of the line of contravallation, but he lost time doing so and had barely finished when he observed that the army outside was being driven back. Some days later, the Gauls,

with 60,000 men, attacked from rising ground to the north which overlooked the circumvallation. There was a bitter fight; the besieged emerged to support the attack and fighting was general along the double line. But numbers, fury and courage were not enough. The Romans with their short sword carried the day: the very gods were fighting for them. Seventy-four battle standards became the trophies of Caesar. Most of the relief army was destroyed; the remnants broke camp by night and took flight in all haste.

Vercingetorix capitulated. He begged for mercy from the victor but received only fetters. So ended this brave and generous defender of Gaul. Caesar took 80,000 prisoners; he gave one Gaul to each of his soldiers, but wishing to win over the people of Autun and the Auvergne, he gave them back 20,000 prisoners. He placed his army in winter quarters: Labienus with two legions in Franche-Comté, two legions in Nivernais, two in Berry, two in Rouergue, one at Chalon-sur-Saône, one at Mâcon, while he himself went to Autun. The Roman Senate voted twenty days of public thanksgiving. The liberty of Gaul perished with Vercingetorix, and this vast country was reduced to a Roman province.

VI. Observations

1. In this campaign, Caesar fought several battles and undertook three major sieges, of which two were successful. It was the first time he had to fight the Gauls united together. Their determination, the skill of their general Vercingetorix and the strength of their army all reflect glory on the Romans for this campaign. They had ten legions, which, along with the cavalry, the auxiliaries, the Germans and the light troops must have made up an army of 80,000 men. The behaviour of the inhabitants of Bourges, the army of relief, the people of Clermont and the inhabitants of Alesia demonstrate the resolution and courage of the Gauls, but equally their impotence due to lack of order, discipline and proper military conduct.
2. But can it be true that Vercingetorix shut himself up in the town, which was not large, with 80,000 men? When he sent away his cavalry, why did he not also send away three-quarters of his infantry? Twenty thousand men would have been more than sufficient to reinforce the garrison of

Alesia, which stood on a hill 3 miles in perimeter, and which besides was inhabited by a numerous and warlike population. There was only enough food in the place for thirty days, so why shut in so many men who could not contribute to the defence but must hasten the surrender? Alesia was strongly defended by its position; it had nothing to fear but hunger. If instead of 80,000 men, Vercingetorix had only had 20,000, he would have had food for 120 days, while 60,000 men taking the field would have troubled the besiegers. It took more than fifty days to assemble a new Gaulish army and for it to arrive to relieve the place. And with 80,000 men, how could Vercingetorix let himself be shut up in the town? He should have taken position outside, halfway up the hill, and encamped there, surrounded by fortifications, ready to sally out and attack Caesar. Caesar tells us that the relief army amounted to 240,000 men. But it did not encamp, and did not manoeuvre like an army so superior to its enemy, but like one of equal size. After two attacks, it detached a force of 60,000 men to attack the high point in the north. This attack failed, but that should not have caused the entire army to retreat in disorder.

3. Caesar's fortifications were substantial; the army had forty days to construct them, and the offensive weapons of the Gauls were powerless to destroy such obstacles. Could a similar challenge be met today? Could a force of 100,000 men blockade a place with lines of contravallation and hold it from behind a circumvallation against attack by 100,000 enemy?

Chapter 8

Gallic War. Eighth campaign (50 BC)[1]

I. Military operations during the winter

The fate of Gaul had been decided, but the Gauls themselves were not reconciled; the greatest discontent stirred in them, like the waves of the ocean after a storm. Caesar had positioned himself at Autun in order to observe them; he left in December, led two legions to the more remote parts of Berry, surprised the inhabitants who had refused to supply hostages, killed many, took prisoners, imposed peace and returned to Autun forty days after setting out. From there he marched on Chartres with two legions, where the inhabitants abandoned the town and took refuge among woods and marshes. He sent his cavalry and light troops to pursue them and installed himself at Orléans. The wretched people of Chartres, harried from every side, abandoned their country and took refuge with their neighbours.

II. War against the Belgians of Beauvais

The people of Beauvais were the most powerful tribe in Belgium. They had raised an army commanded by Correus, lord of Beauvais, and Commius, lord of Arras, under the pretext of making war on the people of Soissons. Caesar gathered four legions and encamped on territory belonging to Beauvais. The people of Beauvais had called to their aid those of Amiens, Rouen, Caux, Arras and Maine. They were camped on a mountain, surrounded on all sides by marshes, and had deposited their women, old men, children, cattle and most precious possessions in the middle of a vast forest. Caesar tried by a variety of manoeuvres to persuade them to leave their position, but without success. This wise and prudent conduct was in contrast with the rash enthusiasm of the Gaulish character, showing just how far they had progressed in their understanding of the art of war. Caesar crossed the

marshes and camped at bowshot range from the Gaulish stronghold. He protected himself with two flat-bottomed ditches 15ft deep and a rampart 12ft high, topped by a parapet and bearing a great number of towers three storeys high. Two very tall towers flanked the gates of the camp. While this was under way, 500 cavalry arrived from Germany and joined the Gauls.

Daily skirmishes between the two armies decided nothing. The cavalry of Reims was defeated by that of Beauvais and almost entirely wiped out. At last three legions of reinforcements which Caesar had sent for arrived from Berry under the command of Trebonius. The Gauls, fearing that they might suffer the fate of Alesia, evacuated their position and took up another, further away. The two armies continued to face one another, and though the Roman army was seven legions strong, it acted with caution. Correus, the Beauvais general, along with 7,000 picked men, attempted to ambush a party of Roman foragers, but he was betrayed, defeated and killed along with his entire force. Without giving the enemy time to recover from the shock of this, Caesar marched on them. They begged for mercy, surrendered and gave hostages; their allies did likewise. The Belgians were defeated for the second time, and Gaul endured the yoke. A great number of families chose to leave their country now that its freedom was lost, and sought refuge on the right bank of the Rhine and beyond the seas. Ambiorix still ruled the people of Liège. Caesar marched against him and subjected his entire country to blood and fire, taking many prisoners, but was unable to seize the person of this implacable enemy of Rome.

III. Siege of Cahors

A great many Gaulish soldiers, impatient of the Roman yoke, left their towns and gathered on the left bank of the Loire under Dumnacus, a general from Anjou who was besieging Poitiers in order to defeat Duratius, an ally of Rome. Caesar's lieutenant, Caninius, marched to the relief of Poitiers and camped within sight of the town. Dumnacus attacked the Roman camp, but was driven off. Some days later, Fabius reinforced the Roman army with two legions, which induced Dumnacus to lift the siege and depart with a view to crossing over to the right bank of the Loire; but on the way he was intercepted by Fabius and beaten with the loss of 12,000 men and all

his baggage. The remnants of his armies, under the orders of Drappes and Lucterius, were marching to take their revenge by carrying war and desolation into the Roman province. But when Caninius caught up with them they took refuge in Cahors, a strong place built on a high hill, surrounded on every side by the river Lot, gathering in enough food to withstand a long siege. Drappes was taken prisoner during a skirmish. The Roman general built a contravallation.

Caesar hastened from Chartres to the camp before Cahors. The town was strong and defended by desperate men; they had enough food to last a long time. The Romans decided to deprive them of water. The inhabitants could only go down to the river by steep tracks in plain sight. The Roman archers soon deprived them of this resource, but there remained a most abundant spring which gushed out at the foot of the town walls. The besiegers constructed a terrace 60ft high, on which they erected a tower of ten storeys which dominated the fountain, even though itself dominated by the walls of the town. The inhabitants were now unable to get water without running the greatest risks, and were deprived of it entirely when an underground gallery intercepted its source. The town was forced to capitulate. Caesar had the hands of all the garrison cut off. Dumnacus, abandoned by his friends and hunted by the Romans, lived in hiding and died miserably. Drappes starved himself to death, and Lucterius, betrayed by a chieftain of the Auvergne, was handed over to the Romans. So ended the last of the Gauls. This event marked the end of the Gallic wars. Thereafter, the Gauls remained quiet and learned to accustom themselves to the dominion of Rome.

After the surrender of Cahors, Caesar crossed the Garonne and travelled across Aquitaine, where no difficulties were encountered. He went to Narbonne and arranged winter quarters for his army. Four legions were quartered in Belgium, two in Autun, two in Touraine on the Loire, two in Limousin, while Caesar himself went to Arras.

IV. Intrigues and troop movements during the year 50

The following year[2] was quiet for Caesar; he had no wars to wage. In spring he travelled to Lombardy, where he was received in triumph. He was fully occupied by intrigues in Rome. Under the pretext of making war on the

Parthians, the Senate deprived him of two legions which it gave to Pompey. Labienus was in command in Cisalpine Gaul; soon after he deserted Caesar for Pompey. During the summer, Caesar returned to Arras and inspected all his legions at Trèves. At the end of October, he placed them in winter quarters, four legions in Belgium and four in Autun, and left soon after to cross the Alps. During the final days of the year 50 and the first days of 49, he began the civil war.

Of all the generals who had led the Gauls during these eight campaigns and had commanded them in the defence of their liberty, only two survived the war. The first was Commius, lord of Arras, who was originally an ally and close friend of Caesar, supporting all his ventures in Gaul and Britain, but became an implacable enemy once he became convinced that the Romans wished to destroy his country's freedom. Eventually disarmed, he lived on far from the sight of any Roman. The second was Ambiorix, chieftain of Liège, who had commanded the Belgians, massacred the legions of Sabinus, besieged Cicero's camp and continually kept up the war. He died in obscurity, but free.

V. Observations

1. During this campaign Caesar was only opposed by the people of Beauvais, who had taken little or no part in the war of Vercingetorix; they only sent 2,000 men to Alesia. They put up a superior resistance because they displayed greater skill and prudence than the Gauls had done previously. But the other Gauls, whether of Berry or of Chartres, failed to join them; all were filled with terror and yielded.
2. The garrison at Cahors was made up of the remnants of the Gaulish armies. Caesar's decision to cut off the hands of all the soldiers was utterly atrocious. In the civil war he showed mercy to his countrymen, but he was cruel and often savage towards the Gauls.

Chapter 9

Civil war. Italian campaign (49 BC)

I. Civil war

On 16 January (that is to say 26 October by our calendar), the Senate passed the ultimate decree that the consuls, praetors, tribunes of the people and proconsuls who were in the vicinity of Rome should ensure that no harm befell the Republic. Lentulus was consul; Antony and Cassius were tribunes. After the publication of the decree, the people went onto a war footing. The consuls recruited troops to create an army for Pompey, who already had two legions in Italy. He had six more in Spain and gave orders that they should proceed to Rome. But Caesar, being informed of all these circumstances at Ravenna, where he then was, although he only had with him the Thirteenth Legion, took the initiative. He addressed the legion, found it devoted to his interests, moved off at once and crossed the Rubicon, the little stream which forms the boundary of the province of Cisalpine Gaul. He captured Rimini by surprise. Here the tribunes of the people, Antony and Cassius, who had fled Rome, came to seek refuge in his camp. In crossing the Rubicon, Caesar had declared a civil war, and defied the anathemas pronounced against any general who crossed the Rubicon under arms, that they should be consigned to the gods of the underworld. Pompey abandoned Rome and withdrew to Capua, 120 miles away, even though he had two legions and 30,000 men close to Rome. He was joined there by the Senate and the principal authorities of the Republic. Caesar left three legions in Gaul to watch the Pyrenees and had the other six join him. He occupied Pesaro, Fano, Ancona and Urbino, sending Antony to Arezzo with five cohorts to control the road to Etruria. All the people were well disposed to him; Osimo and Ascoli opened their gates. Upon news of this, the consul Lentulus abandoned Rome and joined Pompey.

Domitius Ahenobarbus had taken up position at Corfinium with thirty cohorts. Caesar encamped under the walls of this town, which is situated

at the junction of several roads and is 6 miles from the modern town of Sulmona. There was an urgent need that Pompey, who was at Capua 120 miles away, should come to the assistance of this important place, but he did not want to commit himself, with a newly raised army, against the seasoned legions from Gaul. As soon as the garrison were told that they were being abandoned, they mutinied, arrested Domitius and went over to Caesar's side. Upon news of this, Pompey resolved to abandon Italy, and withdrew to Brindisi. The consuls and part of the army embarked there, crossed the Adriatic and disembarked at Dyrrachium in Epirus. Caesar invested Brindisi with six legions. He built a dyke to close the entrance to the port, and in the section where the water was too deep, he installed rafts moored by anchors and covered with earth and a bank to protect his troops. On the ninth day after this great work was begun, Pompey's ships arrived; he embarked with his twenty cohorts and joined his army in Epirus. Thus, in the first days of March, three months after crossing the Rubicon, Caesar found himself master of all Italy. The promptness of his march may be contrasted with the hesitation of Pompey. During this time, the legions in Spain had assembled in Catalonia.

II. Caesar gains control of Italy

Caesar would ideally have followed Pompey in order to prevent him from receiving the assistance which he expected from all parts of Asia, but he was not master of the sea. He would need several months to assemble the means necessary to carry his army across. Meanwhile, he was threatened in Gaul by the six legions of Spain, reinforced by numerous auxiliary troops under the orders of Pompey's lieutenants. He took all available measures to assemble shipping at Brindisi. He sent Curio to govern Sicily, giving him three legions formed from the troops at Corfinium. He also sent Valerius to Sardinia and Corsica with one legion, whereupon the inhabitants of the two islands drove out Pompey's lieutenant and received Caesar's representative in triumph. Cato, who had been in command in Sicily, evacuated the province and joined Pompey in Greece. Having thus attended to the most pressing matters, Caesar travelled to Rome. He did all he could to win over the most important persons in the city, but he failed. He proposed in the

Senate to send a deputation to Pompey to negotiate a settlement. Matters in Rome were full of difficulties: the leading figures of the Republic were against him; the populace, though strongly in support of him, was led by tribunes who would only allow him an uncertain authority. He gladly left Rome, crossed the Alps and arrived before Marseille. He sent his lieutenant Fabius to cross the Pyrenees with the three legions which were in winter quarters at Narbonne, and there he assembled a powerful force of Gaulish cavalry and auxiliary troops.

By the month of April (January by our calendar), Gaul, Italy, Sardinia, Corsica and Sicily supported Caesar; Spain, Africa, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece supported Pompey. But Caesar was dominant at Rome.

III. Observations

1. Pompey was mistaken about the sentiments of the people; the opinions of the great men, the senators, who spoke loud and long against Caesar, led him astray. The people were determined supporters of Caesar.
2. Pompey's six legions in Spain could have joined him within a few weeks by embarking at Cartagena, Valencia and Tarragona and disembarking at Naples and Ostia.
3. Pompey should have held on to Rome and concentrated all his forces there. At the start of a civil war, all the troops must be kept together, because they inspire one another and draw confidence from the strength of their side: they become attached to it and remain faithful.[1] If the thirty cohorts of Domitius had been encamped outside Rome with Pompey's first two legions; if the legions of Spain, Africa, Egypt and Greece had been transported to Italy by a coordinated sea operation, Pompey would have confronted Caesar with a larger army than Caesar's own.
4. Unable to carry his army over to Greece, Caesar went to Spain. He feared with good reason that the legions there might either take ship to join Pompey, or invade Gaul.

Chapter 10

Civil war. Spanish campaign (49 BC)

I. Forty-day war between the Segre and the Ebro

As Caesar left for Spain, he said: 'I am going to fight an army without a general and will then return to fight a general without an army.' Essentially, all Pompey's veteran legions were in Spain under Afranius, Petreius and Varro; the first was in command on the Ebro, the second in the Kingdom of León and in Portugal, and the third in Andalucia. Afranius and Petreius brought together their five legions at Lerida in Catalonia, along with eighty cohorts of Spanish infantry and 5,000 Spanish cavalry, while Varro remained at Seville with two legions. Caesar halted outside Marseille and sent ahead Fabius, his lieutenant, with three legions and 18,000 Gauls, including 6,000 cavalry.[1] Arriving at Lerida, occupied by Afranius, Fabius fortified his camp and constructed bridges over the Segre in order to guarantee his communications and to facilitate foraging on both banks. The foragers from the two armies frequently came to blows. One day, when Fabius had sent two legions to protect them, one of his bridges was washed away by the violence of the current. Afranius hastened out with four legions to take advantage of the situation, but Fabius' men maintained good order, formed battle lines on a hill and held off the enemy attacks until Fabius arrived with two more legions which had crossed the Segre by the other bridge. This put an end to the combat.

Two days later, Caesar arrived at the camp with an escort of 900 cavalry. Leaving six cohorts to guard the bridge, he marched up to Lerida, close to the camp of Afranius, to whom he offered battle. He sited his camp 400 paces from the foot of the mountain, using the soldiers of his third line to dig a ditch 15ft wide, protecting the work with his first and second line, which remained in battle formation. Once the work was complete, he brought the army within the entrenchment. Three days after fortifying his camp, he brought into it his baggage and recalled the six cohorts which

he had left behind. The town of Lerida[2] was separated from the camp of Afranius by a plain 300 paces wide; in the middle was a small hill, which Caesar attacked with three legions. Afranius forestalled him, a fierce fight ensued and Afranius retained possession of the hill, fortifying it to ensure it would not fall. Meanwhile, the Segre and the Cinca overflowed and washed away the pontoon bridges: Caesar's army found itself cut off by the floods, whereas the Pompeian army controlled the stone bridge at Lerida. This took place in June, when the corn crops were almost ripe, there was no old corn left in the granaries and farm animals had been taken away by the peasants, who had taken refuge in the mountains. Famine took hold in Caesar's camp. The Spanish light troops and Portuguese auxiliaries of Afranius were equipped with leather floats with which they were accustomed to crossing rivers and floods: this meant that they could continue to forage as usual. In the midst of all this, a convoy of several thousand horse, comprising Gallic cavalry and archers from Rouergue, arrived opposite Caesar's camp; it was halted by the river. Afranius crossed the bridge at Lerida with three legions to attack the convoy, which was compelled to withdraw into the mountains after losing several hundred men. Caesar found himself in an awkward position. Word of this reached Rome, where crowds of people hurried to congratulate the family of Afranius.

Meanwhile the river level dropped. Caesar constructed boats made of wicker covered with hide, travelled 17[3] miles up the Segre, carried a legion over to the left bank, and in two days built a new pontoon bridge, meaning that his camp could once more be abundantly supplied. Some days later, the Gallic cavalry surprised a cohort of Afranius' men and cut it to pieces. The Gallic and German cavalry established a great ascendancy over the Spanish cavalry, which no longer dared to venture far or to hold ground. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Tarragona, Huesca and Calahorra all submitted to Caesar and supplied him with corn. The new bridge being too far from his camp, he adopted the course of drawing off water from the Segre so that it could be forded. It was now the turn of Afranius to fear hunger, Caesar's cavalry being so much superior to his own, so he decided to carry the war into Aragon. At Mequinenza, he gathered together sufficient boats to construct a bridge across the Ebro. The bridge was promptly completed, and, leaving a garrison of two cohorts in Lerida, he set off for Mequinenza, only 17 miles

away. Caesar sent his cavalry in pursuit, which caught up with Afranius' rearguard. At daylight, Caesar made up cohorts out of his weakest men and left them to guard the camp. With the remainder he crossed the Segre by the ford which he had just made, the soldiers having water up to their necks, and by three o'clock in the afternoon he caught up with the enemy. Seeing this, Afranius deployed his army in battle formation between the camp he was occupying and Mequinenza. There were difficult defiles to be traversed.

The following morning, at daybreak, both armies marched on. Caesar took an indirect route in the hope of reaching these defiles ahead of the enemy. He succeeded and formed line of battle facing the enemy, cutting off his path to the Ebro. In this difficult position, Afranius abandoned the direct road. He sent four Spanish cohorts to occupy a mountain, but they were surrounded by the Gallic cavalry and massacred, which horrified his army. Caesar's soldiers loudly demanded a battle, but he had informers in the camp of Afranius and hoped to overcome his army by skilful manoeuvring and negotiation. Afranius and Petreius returned to the camp which they had occupied the previous evening, while Caesar placed his on high ground, blocking the tracks leading to the Ebro. Afranius and Petreius had two courses to choose from: either to return to Lerida or march to Tarragona. They lacked water and could not get to the river, which obliged them to construct entrenchments from their camp to the nearest water source. While they themselves presided over this work, the men from the two camps fraternized and the soldiers of Afranius expressed their wish to put an end to the war. However, Petreius executed all of Caesar's soldiers whom he found in his camp, re-establishing order and discipline. Finally, Caesar's enemies decided to return to Lerida, but, hard pressed by Caesar's troops, Afranius realized the impossibility of completing the retreat. He camped, spent several days building fortifications, but had no water. Having no more forage, he ordered the killing of the baggage animals. The two camps were no more than two miles apart. The armies marched out and lined up in battle formation; Afranius in two lines, with his auxiliary troops in reserve, and Caesar in three lines. Caesar's first line, twenty cohorts strong, was made up of four cohorts from each legion, the second and third lines of three cohorts, with the archers and slingers among the cavalry on the wings. As they were about to come into combat, Afranius parleyed with

Caesar, who granted him peace, on the sole condition that his army should be instantly disbanded, with the Spaniards returning home at once and the Italians crossing back over the Pyrenees and the Alps under escort.

II. Developments in Andalucia

Varro,[4] lieutenant of Pompey, commanded in Southern Spain. He raised thirty auxiliary cohorts in his province, built ten galleys at Cadiz and several more at Seville, placed six cohorts in Cadiz, sent corn to Marseille and planned to shut himself up in Cadiz with his army. Caesar, master of Catalonia, went to Cordoba and summoned there all the chieftains of Andalucia. Cordoba and Carmona declared for him and expelled Varro's troops, such was Andalucia's attachment to Caesar. When Cadiz also declared in his favour, Varro surrendered together with his one remaining legion. Thus all of Spain was pacified, thanks to the sentiments of the inhabitants. Having pacified all these territories, Caesar left Cassius[5] with four legions in command of the province, while he travelled by land to Narbonne and from there arrived before Marseille.

III. Siege of Marseille

Marseille, one of the strongest towns in the Mediterranean, had declared for Pompey. At the beginning of May in the year 49, it closed its gates to Caesar, who summoned fifteen of the principal citizens in a vain effort to change the attitudes of the inhabitants. Domitius, who had surrendered Corfinium and was still strongly attached to Pompey's party, arrived at the town with several galleys and was appointed governor. Meanwhile, Gaius Trebonius invested the town with three legions and began siege operations. At the same time, wishing to control the sea, he had twelve galleys built in thirty days at Arles and placed them under the command of Decimus Brutus. Seventeen galleys from Marseille, of which eleven were decked over, and a large number of smaller vessels filled with archers and hillmen from Albi, left port to attack Brutus' squadron, which lay at anchor near one of the small islands at the entrance to the Gulf of Marseille. The action was brief and decisive, the Romans emerging victorious and Marseille losing nine galleys. Trebonius,

on his part, mounted two attacks, one near the port and the other on the opposite side, Marseille being then a peninsula. Nasidius, with sixteen ships equipped with bronze rams, passed through the Straits of Sicily and sailed into the Port of Marseille. This reinforcement gave Marseille command of the sea. They then set sail and anchored off Toulon, but Brutus attacked and defeated them there. Four of their galleys were captured and five sunk; one escaped with Nasidius' fleet and reached Spain.

Trebonius built a tower of brick 30ft high by 30ft in diameter at the foot of the walls. He also constructed a covered gallery 60ft long from the base of the tower to the base of the walls of the rampart. The defenders of Marseille, fearing lest their town be taken by assault, parleyed and obtained a truce. However, they treacherously took advantage of high winds, sallied out and burnt all the towers and machines of the besiegers, who were infuriated but not discouraged by such perfidy; within a few days they replaced all their machines. Finally, disheartened by their losses, the besieged decided to surrender, suffering from the most terrible famine. They came out and laid down their arms at the feet of Caesar, who had returned from Spain. He preserved the town and installed two legions as garrison. The town had endured a six-month siege, capitulating in October.

Arriving at Rome, Caesar was appointed Dictator and marched his army to Brindisi: he had put it to good use. He had crossed the Rubicon in January,[6] and was master of all Italy in March.[7] In October he had conquered Spain and Marseille, and by November he was Dictator in Rome.

IV. Observations

1. Caesar overcame an army of equal strength to his own through sheer skill in manoeuvring. Such results can only be achieved in civil wars.[8] His most important piece of work was to bleed water off from the river by digging two channels 30ft wide, which rendered it fordable.
2. When he arrived before Lerida, he dug a ditch 15ft wide by 9ft deep, involving the excavation of 405ft^3 for every two running yards;[9] seven men at a time[10] could work in each 2-yard stretch; they would have taken five hours to excavate the ditch.[11] In Catalonia, quite steep slopes remain stable.

Chapter 11

Civil war. Campaign in Thessaly (48 BC)

I. Army operations in Epirus up to the reunion with Antony

Caesar spent only a few days in Rome. He resigned the dictatorship and travelled to Brindisi to rejoin his army, now twelve legions strong.

Pompey, who had only five legions when he arrived in Epirus, now had nine; he had taken one from Sicily, two from Asia and one from Crete. He was awaiting two more which Scipio, his father-in-law, was bringing to him, and in addition had a great many auxiliary troops. He was master of the sea, with his fleet – made up of squadrons from Egypt, Syria, Rhodes and Illyria – under the orders of Bibulus, his admiral, who was patrolling the entrance to the Adriatic with 110 galleys to prevent Caesar from crossing the sea. Caesar set sail from Brindisi with thirteen galleys and a convoy of cargo ships carrying 20,000 men on 4 January (14 October by our calendar), and dropped anchor the next day amid the rocks of Chimerium, in Epirus. Immediately after disembarking, he sent his ships back to collect the rest of his army, which he had left at Brindisi under the command of Antony. However, the ships were attacked by Bibulus, who captured and burned a number of them, and thereafter established naval patrols from Oricum,[1] a port close to Chimerium, to Salona (Spalatro), and succeeded in severing all communication between Caesar and Antony. Pompey was away in Macedonia when he learned that Caesar had crossed the Adriatic and was already master of Oricum and Epirus, and that he threatened Pompey's stores at Dyrrachium. Pompey hastened there with all speed, camping on the right bank of the Apsus,[2] covering Dyrrachium, opposite Caesar, who was covering Oricum. Only the river separated the two armies. This led to negotiations, which briefly gave rise to hopes of a reconciliation. Matters continued in this way for five months, without Pompey taking advantage of his numerical superiority; he had his whole army there together, whereas

Caesar's army was partly in Italy under Antony and partly under him in Epirus.

Antony finally put to sea with three legions of veterans, and by morning was within sight of Durazzo.[3] He was driven by a southerly wind as far north as Cape Medea. Barely was he off the cape when the wind changed; this saved his convoy, which was being pursued by sixteen galleys and caused the latter's destruction, being driven ashore and wrecked, soldiers and sailors alike perishing. Two of Antony's ships which had fallen behind the rest were obliged to anchor off Alessio and were attacked by several enemy galleys. One of these ships, which was manned by recruits, was captured without resistance; the other, carrying veterans, ran aground: these brave fellows got ashore, sustained a battle against 400 cavalry and arrived in Caesar's camp without losing a single man.

II. Fighting at Dyrrachium

Pompey was the first to break camp, with a view to intercepting Antony and beating him before Caesar could join him. Caesar travelled up the Apsus in order to cross at a ford, which lost him a day. Despite this delay, he joined up with Antony and forestalled Pompey, who withdrew and encamped at Asparagium. Caesar, after effecting his junction with Antony, summoned the garrisons which he had left on the coast and set off after Pompey. On the third day of march, Caesar camped near his rival; the next day he offered battle, but in vain. Caesar then decamped and gained a march on Pompey, heading at lightning speed to Durazzo, in order to capture this great depot of food and war material. He invested the place, but Pompey hurried up to protect his stores and camped on a high rock by the sea, called Petra, where there was a cove and anchorage. Caesar's camp was thus located between the town of Dyrrachium and Pompey's camp. It contained ten legions with which he offered battle to Pompey, who refused it constantly, remaining static in his camp. This made Caesar decide to scare him.

He adopted the plan of enclosing Pompey's camp with fortified lines, building twenty-six forts on a contravallation 14 miles around, the right end anchored on his camp near Dyrrachium and the left on the sea, north of the mouth of the Apsus. Pompey's camp and the cove at Petra were enclosed

by these lines. This gave Caesar several advantages: the first was to discredit Pompey; the second, to cut off his ability to forage and hinder his numerous cavalry from finding food and roaming the countryside. Pompey allowed himself to be shut in and contented himself with building a protective fortification parallel to that of Caesar; he built twenty-four forts opposed to the twenty-six, on a defence line 12 miles long. This gave him the advantage of making him master of the interior space, as he was also of the sea, over which he could receive shipments. The enclosed ground was sown with seed, which provided fodder in quantity. His position being more central, Pompey had all sorts of advantages over Caesar; in less than an hour he could transfer from right to left, following the sea shore, while Caesar needed six hours.

The superiority of Caesar's troops, man for man, was such that they battled long and well against Pompey's superiority in numbers and centrality of position. Meanwhile, the two armies suffered equally from want. Caesar, having no corn, was reduced to living on vegetables and *chara*, a very coarse type of root. Pompey lacked forage and his numerous cavalry suffered greatly; even water became scarce and disease appeared in the camp. It was the month of June. Pressed by the need for forage, Pompey built a camp on the right bank of the Apsus, outside the leftmost end of Caesar's lines, enabling him to forage in the countryside. At the end of his line, Caesar built a camp a bowshot away from Pompey's. Combats occurred on a daily basis: on one day, three took place, one at Durazzo and two at the lines. In one of these encounters, Caesar captured six battle standards and inflicted 2,000 losses on his enemy. Pompey, who had a great many archers and slingers, filled his towers with them and inflicted great harm on his adversary, who, feeling at a disadvantage, wished to end this painful situation by way of a pitched battle. To this end he marched to a bowshot distance from Pompey's camp, but Pompey, constant in his policy, remained in his camp and even preferred to send away his cavalry by sea, since he could no longer feed them, rather than risk a battle.

Despite refusing a general engagement, Pompey knew how to take advantage of his position. In order to attack Caesar's left,[4] he ordered his troops to provide themselves with bundles of wood and cover their helmets with strands of wicker as protection from slingshot. While sixty cohorts mounted

a frontal attack, before daybreak, a legion which had been embarked on cargo vessels landed and attacked the enemy left. The small camp here which anchored the left of Caesar's line was occupied by the Ninth Legion; it consisted of a 10ft-high rampart and a 15ft ditch. Pompey captured it and was overwhelming Caesar's troops when Antony arrived with a reserve of twelve cohorts and began to contain the enemy. Caesar himself marched against Pompey's small camp and forced an entry, but Pompey marched on him with his five legions and beat him. Fear, disorder and confusion reigned throughout Caesar's army, which was at serious risk of annihilation: he lost 1,000 men killed and thirty-two battle standards. This success earned Pompey the title of *imperator*. But Fortune, who had served Pompey so well that day, was angered that he had failed to take full advantage of her favours and now deserted him.

Caesar finally realized how defective was the system of war which he had adopted. He withdrew all his garrisons, sent all his baggage to Apollonia escorted by one legion and began his withdrawal at three o'clock in the morning, leaving his wounded at Apollonia and marching into Thessaly. Pompey followed him, abandoning the sea shore where his large fleet gave him so many advantages.

III. Battle of Pharsalus

Scipio had been sent from Brindisi to Asia as proconsul, to assemble the legions there and induce them to declare for Pompey. As soon as he heard that Caesar had crossed the sea, he set off with two legions to join Pompey. He arrived in Macedonia, which had declared for the Dictator; he marched against Domitius, Caesar's general. The two armies camped facing each other on the River Haliacmon, which separates Thessaly from Macedonia. Upon reaching Thessaly, Caesar summoned Domitius, while Pompey joined up with Scipio. After a series of marches and counter-marches, the two armies came face-to-face on the plains of Pharsalus. The army of the Republic was proud of the cause which it was defending and of the success which it had just achieved at Dyrrachium; that of the Dictator was filled with confidence in its leader's good fortune and in its own superiority, made up as it was of seasoned legions which had always proved victorious.

Pompey, being persuaded of the superiority of Caesar's army, wished to avoid battle, but he could not resist the impatience of the senators. These conscript fathers were impatient to re-enter the walls of Rome, and the superiority of the Pompeian cavalry was much talked up. Labienus, Caesar's former lieutenant, argued strongly for battle, saying that the old soldiers who had beaten the Gauls were dead and that Caesar only had recruits.

Pompey had 110 cohorts, amounting to 45,000 Romans under arms. Caesar had 30,000 men. Each side had large numbers of allied troops. The historians differ greatly as to the total number of men who fought at Pharsalus, and some give a figure as high as 300,000 or 400,000 men. Caesar's Tenth, Ninth and Eighth Legions formed his right, under the command of Sulla. In the centre he placed twenty-four cohorts, leaving only two cohorts to guard his camp. He took one cohort from each of the legions forming his third line to serve in a special formation designed to resist cavalry. Between the two armies there was barely space enough for them to charge together. Pompey ordered his men to receive the charge where they stood.

As soon as the signal was given, Caesar's army advanced at a run, but seeing that the enemy line did not move, these old soldiers halted of their own accord to draw breath, after which they ran on to the enemy, throwing their javelins and coming to grips with their short swords. Pompey's cavalry, who were on his left, supported by archers, poured around Caesar's right wing; but the six cohorts in reserve held firm and charged the cavalry with such determination that they were forced to take flight. From that moment, the battle was decided.

Caesar lost 200 men, half of them officers. Pompey lost 15,000 men dead or wounded on the field of battle; he could not even defend his camp, which fell into the hands of the victor the same day. The remnants of the beaten army took refuge on a small hill, where Caesar surrounded them. At dawn the next day, these 24,000 men laid down their arms. The day's trophies amounted to nine eagles, that is to say all those of the legions present, and 180 battle standards.

Pompey withdrew in all haste, hotly pursued. Reaching Pelusium in Egypt, he sought refuge with the young King Ptolemy, who was in this town at the head of his army, making war on his sister Cleopatra. Pompey disembarked almost alone on the beach and was assassinated on Ptolemy's

orders. Caesar landed in Egypt a few weeks later, entering Alexandria at the head of two legions and a few squadrons of cavalry.

So perished Pompey the Great at the age of 58, after having occupied the highest offices of the Republic over a thirty-five-year period. He had fought sixteen military campaigns: those of the years 83, 82, 77, 49 and 48 against the Romans of the faction of Marius and Caesar; those of 81 in Africa and of 76, 75, 74, 73, 72 and 71 in Spain; that of 67 against the pirates; and those of 65, 64 and 63 against Mithridates. He had celebrated triumphs in 81 for Africa, in 71 for Spain and in 61 for Asia. Pompey, the man the Romans so loved and to whom they awarded the surname 'Great' when he was only 26 years old, had been three times consul: in 70 and 55, both times with Crassus, and in 82 with Metellus Scipio.

IV. Observations

1. The twelve legions which Caesar assembled at Brindisi came there from Spain, Gaul and the banks of the Po; it seems, therefore, that he would have done better to march them through Illyria and Dalmatia into Macedonia. From Placentia, the point of intersection of the two routes, the distance to be travelled to reach Epirus is the same. His army would have arrived there all together, and he would have had no need of a sea crossing, a most important obstacle which could easily have been fatal to him, in the face of a superior fleet.
2. This obstacle, admittedly, was less formidable then than it would be today. Navigation was in its infancy, and the ships were not suited to remaining at sea for long periods or sailing into wind. It even seems that the ships did not carry water supplies sufficient for long periods, since a few days of contrary winds led to Bibulus' fleet falling grievously short of water.
3. Pompey, with such a large army, should never have allowed himself to be held in check by Caesar's army prior to its junction with Antony, that is to say for five months.
4. Caesar's manoeuvres at Dyrrachium were rash in the extreme, and for this he paid the penalty. How could he have hoped to keep the upper hand throughout a line of contravallation 14 miles long, surrounding

an army which had the advantages of being master of the sea and of occupying a central position? After immense field works, he failed, was beaten, lost the flower of his troops and was obliged to quit the field of battle. He had two lines of contravallation, one of 14 miles around Pompey's camp and another against Dyrrachium. In response, Pompey merely constructed defensive fortifications facing Caesar's contravallation: it is hard to see what else he could have done, being resolved not to give battle. But he should have derived greater advantage from the fight at Dyrrachium; that day could have witnessed the triumph of the Republic.

When one considers carefully the field works undertaken by the two armies at Dyrrachium and those of Caesar at Alesia, and then imagines two modern armies in the same situation, the entire difference between the two methods of making war becomes obvious. At Alesia, Caesar, with 80,000 men, built a double line of ramparts, enclosed an army of equal strength and protected his army with a line of circumvallation 12 or 14 miles long, which enabled him to hold off more than 200,000 men. When the attack came, it is clear that without the aid of these field fortifications, he could not have held out. He had profited from the forty days available before the arrival of the relief army to surround himself with ditches, ramparts, pits and so on, and his position became impregnable. Today, however extensive the works which an army could construct in forty days, supposing it to be organised like the Romans, these advantages would be eliminated by the superiority in artillery of the assailant. The artillery of the army inside the lines would have to fire in all directions, whereas that of the attackers would be concentrated on the point of the main attack, aside from that needed to lend credibility to false attacks. Then the artillery of the army within the lines would at once be silenced by the great superiority of the attacker, and whether it attacked head-on or in flank, the attacking army, protected by the strength of its artillery, would merely have to fill the ditches and pits with bundles of wood and build ramps up to the lines. The ancients did not possess this advantage, because their projectile weapons were too mediocre and their principal weapons relied on cold steel. Thus the obstacle of fortification remained intact.

At Dyrrachium, the lines were protected by towers; today, artillery would reduce them to wreckage in a few hours. Our methods of building fortifications have remained the same, but their importance has greatly diminished. To Greek or Roman soldiers, the pick and shovel were as vital as the sword and shield, yet modern armies use them no more. Is this wrong, or are they right?[5]

5. At Pharsalus, Caesar lost only 200 men against 15,000 lost by Pompey. We observe similar results in all the battles of the ancients, yet such an outcome is unknown today, when the loss in killed and wounded may vary in amount, but in a proportion of one to three. The greatest difference between the losses of the victor and the vanquished lies in the number of prisoners; this again is due to the nature of the weapons used. The projectile weapons of the ancients generally did little damage, the armies coming to grips relying mainly on cold steel. It was thus natural for the loser to suffer many casualties and the winner very few. Modern armies, when they come to close-quarter fighting, only do so at the end of the action and when much blood has already been spilt. For three-quarters of the day neither side is either winner or loser, the losses inflicted by firearms being about equal on either side. A cavalry charge does supply an analogy to what happened to ancient armies: the loser suffers much higher losses than the winner, because the squadron which runs away is pursued and sabred, and so suffers great harm without being able to inflict the same in return.

Ancient armies, fighting with cold steel, had to be composed of tough soldiers, as their battles came down to a multitude of single combats. An army composed of better men and more experienced soldiers necessarily had a great advantage, as illustrated when a centurion of the Tenth Legion said to Scipio in Africa: 'Give me ten of my comrades who are prisoners like me, let us fight against one of your cohorts, and you will see what we are made of.' What this centurion claimed was true: a modern soldier who spoke like this would merely be a braggart. Ancient armies approached the ideals of chivalry; a knight armed from head to toe could confront a battalion.

The two armies at Pharsalus were both composed of Romans and auxiliaries, but with the difference that Caesar's Romans were

accustomed to the wars of the north, and those of Pompey to the wars of Asia.

6. This campaign of Caesar's, which made him master of the Mediterranean world, lasted ten months. The Battle of Pharsalus took place a month after the harvest, in July (by our calendar); the campaign began in mid-October (by our calendar). Pompey was assassinated at the end of September (the month of his birth), a month or six weeks after the battle. The historians give little information about dates. We merely know that Antony only rejoined Caesar at the end of winter, that is to say in March, or according to the calendar then in use, in May; and that while the armies were at Dyrrachium, the crops were ripening, which was therefore in June by our calendar or at the end of September by the calendar of the time.

Chapter 12

Civil war. Alexandrian campaign (47 BC)

I. Military operations at Alexandria during the first months

Caesar landed at the Great Harbour[1] of Alexandria with ten galleys, two legions and 800 cavalry, and occupied the royal palace, which was situated facing the isthmus which separates the two ports near the circus, and also the theatre, which formed the citadel. The Alexandrians were angered that Caesar was accompanied by his lictors, which was seen as a sign of jurisdiction; they took to the streets and several Romans were killed. King Ptolemy[2] was a child, ruled by the eunuch Pothinus. He was at war with his sister, Queen Cleopatra. Since the Roman people had been charged with executing the Will of the late king, the Dictator ordered both parties to present themselves before him and to cease hostilities. The eunuch Pothinus then ordered the king's army, which was at Pelusium, to march to Alexandria. It consisted of 20,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry and was commanded by Achillas, and was made up in large part of Romans who had served in the army of Gabinius.[3]

As soon as Caesar learned that the army was nearing Alexandria, he captured the king and the regent, and stationed troops in every place which could add to his safety. Achillas took possession of the entire town, apart from the places occupied by the Romans, who soon found themselves blockaded on the land side, with no communication except by sea. The Alexandrians went to the Harbour of Eunostus to take possession of seventy-two galleys which were there; fifty had returned from service with Pompey's army, to whose aid they had been sent, while twenty-two were the guard ships normally stationed at Alexandria. If these ships had fallen into their power it would have been all up for Caesar, but after a fierce fight, he managed to burn them and so remained master of the sea. He gained control of the Pharos,[4] situated at the outer side of the Great Harbour, and became master of the entire sea coast. Caesar then turned his attention landwards. In need of forage, he

took over all the houses between him and the landward gate so that he could communicate freely with the country around Lake Mareotis, from where he obtained food and fodder. He had the eunuch Pothinus put to death. A few weeks later, the youngest of the king's sisters, Arsinoë, escaped from the palace, reached the camp of Achillas, had him killed and replaced him with the eunuch Ganymedes.

Every day the Romans received supplies of food, galleys and troops, whether archers from Crete or Rhodes or cavalry from Asia. Caesar had sent Mithridates,[5] a man who was devoted to him, to assemble troops in Asia Minor, place himself at their head, march across Syria and the Suez desert, and join him in Alexandria.

Both sides worked on fortifications. The Egyptians had closed off every approach with large crenelated walls and erected a large number of ten-storey towers. As the canals which carried water from the Nile to Alexandria were under the control of Ganymedes, he blocked all those which supplied water to the part of town occupied by the Romans. At the same time, he used machines to lift sea water into the reservoirs in the area held by the Romans, and within a few days the water became so brackish that it was no longer drinkable. The Romans were alarmed, but they obtained water from springs near Marabout and the tower of Pharos; they also dug numerous wells on the sea shore, which yielded fresh water. At this time, the Thirty-Seventh Legion, along with a large number of ships carrying food, weapons and machines, arrived from Rhodes and anchored near the Tour des Arabes, to the west of Alexandria. The east wind, which normally prevails here at this time of year, prevented them from reaching port in Alexandria. The convoy was in danger, but Caesar set out with his fleet to save it. This led to a sea battle in which the Egyptian fleet lost a galley and had to take refuge in the Harbour of Eunostus. Caesar led his convoy past them in triumph and returned to the Great Harbour.

II. Sea battle

Ganymedes, seeing the ineffectiveness of this tactic on which he had been counting,[6] returned to the idea of equipping a fleet. He ordered that all the ships and galley hulls to be found in the Harbour of Eunostus be made

seaworthy as quickly as possible. He dismantled the roofs of colonnades and public buildings in order to take the timbers from them, brought from the seven mouths of the Nile the warships stationed there to defend them, and in a few days had twenty-two quadriremes, five quinqueremes and a large number of smaller vessels of every size, all crewed by skilled sailors. Caesar had thirty-four galleys, with nine from Rhodes, eight from Pontus, five from Syria and twelve from Asia Minor, but of these only five were quinqueremes and ten quadriremes; all the rest were much inferior. Nevertheless, he sailed out of the Great Harbour, rounded the island of Pharos and formed up in line of battle off the Harbour of Eunostus. The galleys from Rhodes formed his right, those of Pontus his left. In response, the Alexandrian fleet appeared. The two fleets were separated by the line of rocks which closes the entrance to the Harbour of Eunostus and which, over a distance of 6 miles, contains only three passages. A fleet seeking to engage in these waters would run great risks and offer a golden opportunity to its enemy. Euphranor, admiral of the galleys from Rhodes, angered to see the enemy behaving with such assurance, sought and received permission to enter the Harbour of Eunostus, leading four galleys through the middle passage. A fierce combat ensued and the Alexandrians were beaten, losing one quinquereme and one bireme. The rest of their fleet fled to the shoreline of the town, where they were protected by the jetties and by archers and slingers on the roofs of the houses.

The Romans were occupying the tower of Pharos, but not the whole of the island on which it stands. They had won ground after a bitter fight, pillaged the island's settlement and taken 6,000 prisoners, but the Alexandrians had kept control of the fortress which forms the bridgehead of the causeway connecting the island to the town. Caesar wished to eliminate this important enemy position, but failed. After several attempts which cost him many casualties, he was routed and himself was obliged to swim back to his galleys, several of which were swamped by the great number of fugitives who took refuge on them. But although the losses were painful, this episode had no serious consequences for Caesar.

King Ptolemy, though young, contrived to persuade Caesar that he wished to use his authority to calm the insurrection, and that in this way he would bring an end to the war. Caesar set him at liberty; but, as soon as this

child had taken his place at the head of his army, he used all his authority to stir up the people, and revealed an implacable hatred of the Romans.

The Alexandrians, despite the setback which they had experienced, had repaired and enlarged their fleet. Convoys were reaching Caesar by sea from the coasts of Asia; the Alexandrian fleet sailed to Canopus, on Aboukir Bay, to intercept them. The Roman admiral Nero[7] quickly led the fleet there, and a sharp engagement followed, in which the brave Euphranor was lost along with his galley.

III. Battle on the Nile

Caesar had been tied up with this wretched war for eight months, with no sign of a successful outcome, when finally Mithridates reached Pelusium with the army which he had assembled in Asia. Mithridates took the place by assault and made a series of long marches towards Memphis, which he reached on the seventh day. From there he descended the left bank of the Nile to bring aid to Caesar in Alexandria. On news of this, King Ptolemy set off with his army, embarked on the Nile and joined the detachment of his army which was resisting Mithridates, close to the upstream end of the Delta. For his part, Caesar took ship to the Tour des Arabes, where he disembarked, rounded the end of Lake Mareotis and marched to join Mithridates. They met up without having to fight; Mithridates was encamped along a canal, about as far up river as Alqam. Ptolemy had several times attacked Mithridates and been driven off, and Caesar now attacked and defeated the king, who perished in the rout. Caesar then marched at top speed to Alexandria, which he reached in a few days. The immense town surrendered and the inhabitants came out to meet their conqueror in the guise of supplicants, offering him all their most precious possessions to appease his just wrath. The Dictator reassured them, crossing the enemy fortifications and re-entering his own lines amidst the acclamations of his troops, who received him as a liberator. He crowned the beautiful Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, drove out Arsinoë, her younger sister, and, leaving the rest of his army in Egypt to protect the new authority, set out with the Sixth Legion, which consisted of veterans, and marched overland to Syria. So ended the Alexandrian War, which occupied the latter part of the year 48 and much of 47.

IV. Observations

1. The Alexandrian War gave nine months' respite to the party of Pompey, raised its hopes and brought it to a good enough condition to fight several more campaigns. This obliged Caesar to fight a campaign in Africa the following year, and two years later, a new campaign in Spain. These two campaigns, in which he required all of his genius and all of his good fortune to emerge victorious, would never have taken place if, after Pharsalus, he had immediately gone to the shores of Africa and there forestalled Cato and Scipio, or if travelling, as he did, to Alexandria he had ordered four or five legions to follow him; there were plenty of ships to carry them. Aside from that, he could easily have accepted the apparent submission of Ptolemy and deferred his revenge by a year.
2. Caesar's two legions and the cavalry detachment with which he entered Alexandria amounted to only 5,000 men, while the ten galleys were crewed by 4,000 men. These were insignificant forces with which to fight a great king and subdue a town like Alexandria, but Caesar had two pieces of luck: the first was to seize the palace, the citadel and the tower of Pharos; the second, to burn the Alexandrian fleet. The Egyptian army only left Pelusium and entered Alexandria a month after his arrival. He soon after received up to twenty-four galleys loaded with troop reinforcements. So, all things considered, there was nothing marvellous about Caesar's Alexandrian war, and all the theories which commentators have put forward to explain it are wrong. Alexandria had two harbours, then as now: the Great Harbour, which Caesar occupied, the entrance of which is defended by the tower of Pharos, and the Harbour of Eunostus which the Alexandrians occupied, which is a large open bay forming an arc 6 miles wide and extending to Marabout. The town of Alexandria only extended to the West over about a third of this distance. By contrast, the Great Harbour is surrounded by the wharves of the town.
3. In his account of the Gallic Wars, Caesar never tells us the strength of his army or the places where he fights; his battles have no name. His continuer[8] is equally obscure. Admittedly he does tell of Mithridates' capture of Pelusium, but he says nothing of the preceding march.

Indeed he is contradicted by other contemporary writers, who say that from Pelusium he marched on Memphis, captured it and descended to Alexandria by the left[9] bank, and that he was stopped somewhere near Alqam by Ptolemy's army.[10] By this account, the point where the canal, of which traces are still visible today, joins the Nile must be the place where the battle was fought. The chronicler calls this canal a rivulet; but it is well known that in Egypt there are no rivulets, only canals. As usual, the historians leave us in the dark about when this battle took place. However, it appears that it must have occurred in late May or early June, when the waters of the Nile are not at their lowest. This implies that Mithridates and his army had crossed the desert in April.

Chapter 13

Civil war. Illyrian campaign (47 BC)

I. Pharnaces attacks the allies of the Roman people

Pharnaces, having been one of the instruments used by Pompey to defeat his father Mithridates,[1] had been rewarded with possession of the Bosphorus. When he saw the Roman Empire torn apart by civil war, he conceived the ambition of gaining control of all the territories which his father had ruled. He seized Colchis and the kingdom of Pontus, whose capital was Sinope, the favoured resort of the great Mithridates, and then he appropriated Lesser Armenia and Cappadocia. Deiotarus, King of Lesser Armenia, and Ariobarzanes, King of Cappadocia, begged the help of Domitius, Caesar's commander in Asia. Domitius only had three legions under his command, and being ordered to send two of them to Caesar in Alexandria, he was left with only one, the Thirty-Sixth. He supplemented it with one legion raised in haste in the Kingdom of Pontus, and two legions which Deiotarus had formed in Roman style, composed of his subjects. He assembled this army at Comana, a town in Cappadocia. From Comana, the route into Armenia lies over a chain of heavily wooded mountains. Domitius followed this crest line and encamped 5 miles from Nicopolis. The next day he approached the ramparts of the town and found himself faced by Pharnaces, who had deployed his army in battle formation in a single line, but with three reserves: one behind his right, another behind his left and the third behind his centre. Domitius, though in the presence of the enemy army, continued to fortify his camp,[2] and when it was finished, occupied it in good order. Pharnaces fortified his right and left flanks with entrenchments, wishing to draw out the duration of the war, hoping that Caesar's predicament in Egypt would result in Domitius having to weaken his forces. But a few days later, Domitius marched against him. The two legions raised by Deiotarus took to their heels and made no contribution to the fight, while the legion raised in Pontus fought badly. The Thirty-Sixth

effectively fought alone, but, attacked on all sides, was obliged to conduct a fighting retreat. Pharnaces achieved a complete victory, remaining master of Pontus, Lesser Armenia and Cappadocia. Domitius withdrew in haste to Asia. In Pontus and Cappadocia, Pharnaces imitated the conduct of his father: he massacred all the Roman citizens and inflicted unheard-of cruelties upon them, in this way re-establishing the empire of his forebears. He believed that the Dictator was doomed, but his triumph lasted only a few months.

II. Caesar defeats Pharnaces: *veni, vidi, vici*

After the Alexandrian War, Caesar led the Sixth Legion into Syria and from there took ship to Cilicia. He met representatives from part of Asia Minor at Tarsus. His presence was badly needed in Rome, but he judged it even more urgent to suppress the rising power of this offspring of Mithridates. He marched to Comana with four legions – the Sixth, the Thirty-Sixth and the two belonging to Deiotarus. Pharnaces tried to appease Caesar by every kind of concession. He had camped with his army under the ramparts of the strong town of Zela, a place famous for the victory which his father Mithridates had gained over Triarius.[3] Caesar occupied a camp 5 miles from him, and some days afterwards, he set off in the middle of the night and approached to a distance of just a mile. At first light, Pharnaces was astonished to see the Roman army building entrenchments so close to him. Only a small valley separated them. He drew up his army in battle formation, descended into the valley and up the other side, and attacked the army of Caesar, who, scorning the enemy manoeuvres, had left his troops spread out on the fortification works. They barely had time to take up their weapons and deploy in order of battle. The Sixth Legion was on the right, and though reduced to only 1,200 men, all of them veterans, it smashed the enemy left, threw itself on his centre, drove the enemy army back into the valley and pursued it at sword-point into its camp, which was captured and became the prey of the victor. Baggage, treasure and all were taken; Pharnaces himself barely had time to flee. This prince perished in battle against one of his vassals some months later. Lesser Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus, the Bosphorus and Colchis were the spoils of this victory. Caesar

gave the Bosphorus to Mithridates of Pergamon. It was after Zela that he exclaimed: 'Happy Pompey, such then are the enemies whose defeat earned you the title of "Great".' He wrote to Rome: *Veni, vidi, vici*.[4]

III. Events in Illyria during the year

Illyria consisted of Pannonia, Liburnia and Dalmatia. Pannonia was made up of Austria and part of Hungary, Vienna, Presburg and Belgrade; Liburnia consisted of Istria and Croatia; Dalmatia extended as far as Macedonia. Salona, today Spalatro, was the capital. After the Battle of Pharsalus, Octavius[5] led part of Pompey's fleet to Illyria. Cornificius with two legions was holding the province for Caesar. Later, when Caesar learned that fugitives from Pharsalus were rallying in Illyria, he sent Gabinius there with two newly raised legions. Whether because Gabinius was imprudent, or because his troops, being newly raised, did not have the necessary resolution, he was defeated by barbarians and besieged in Salona, where he died of sickness and regret. Octavius, who was master of the sea, took advantage of this development and brought three-quarters of the province under Pompeian control. Cornificius held his own with difficulty. Caesar, shut up in Alexandria, was unable to assist him, but Vatinius, who commanded the military depot at Brindisi, had under his command several thousand veterans belonging to Caesar's twelve legions. These were men discharged from hospital who were at the depot waiting to rejoin their legions. Vatinius embarked them on transport ships and a few galleys, encountered Octavius' fleet and comprehensively defeated it. Octavius withdrew to Sicily. Caesar was now dominant in the Adriatic and the province of Illyria submitted to him.

IV. Greek campaign in the same year

Calenus, lieutenant of Caesar, besieged Athens, which had declared for Pompey, and took it after a fierce resistance. Caesar spared the inhabitants of the town and said to their representatives: 'Must it be then that though you deserve to die, you always owe your safety to the memory of your ancestors?'[6] Megara underwent a worse siege. When the inhabitants were at their

last extremity, they released some lions which Cassius had collected there to be taken to Rome and used in the fights which he was to stage for the people. But these ferocious creatures hurled themselves on the inhabitants and devoured several of them in the most horrible way. The inhabitants of Megara were all sold into slavery.

A lieutenant of Pompey had built a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth, which prevented Calenus from entering the Peloponnese. However, after the Battle of Pharsalus, this obstacle was overcome and Calenus gained control of this province. When he reached Patras, Cato, who was there with the Pompeian fleet, abandoned Greece.

V. Caesar's conduct at Rome

Immediately after the Battle of Zela, Caesar set off with a cavalry escort and hastened to Rome, where his presence was necessary. The Battle of Pharsalus had not produced any change in the metropolis, which had been subject to him since the start of the civil war. The consul had appointed him Dictator while he was in Alexandria, with Antony as his Master of Horse,[7] with the result that, during the year 47, there was no other magistrate apart from the Dictator and his Master of Horse. The latter, wielding the sovereign power at Rome, gave himself up to all kinds of debauchery, scandalizing the citizens by his behaviour and oppressing them by his exactions. A young Tribune of the People called Dolabella, attracted to novelties, seeking renown and deeply in debt, proposed to the people a law for the abolition of all debts, which, as is usual in such cases, set the entire Republic in uproar. In another quarter, the old soldiers who had conquered Gaul, unhappy at the delays in granting them the rewards which they had been promised, mutinied. The Second Legion refused to go to Sicily; all refused to march. Then Caesar entered Rome. To win the favour of the humbler classes, he introduced a law to remit a year's rent to all citizens paying less than 250 francs.[8] He also remitted the arrears and interest on debt which had accrued since the start of the civil war. He sold all the property of his enemies and used every possible means to obtain money; even Pompey's possessions were sold at auction: Antony bought them and tried to exempt himself from paying for them, which briefly earned him the displeasure of the Dictator.

Caesar's arrival calmed the unrest of the legions, but soon after they mutinied with even greater fury. All the officers who sought to intervene were put to death, and by a spontaneous impulse they seized their eagles and set off for the capital in a threat to Caesar himself. He had the gates of the city closed, but when the mutineers reached the Field of Mars, he went out and stood severely before them, and asked them sternly what they wanted. 'We are covered with wounds,' they replied to him, 'for too long we have marched across the world and shed our blood: we want our discharge.' He simply replied: 'Granted'. Soon after, he added that in a few weeks he would be leaving, and that once he had conquered with new soldiers, he would give them what they had been promised. On this note he rose and made to depart, but his lieutenants begged him to speak a few words of kindness to those old companions with whom he had gained so much glory and overcome so many dangers. Caesar took his seat again and addressed them, calling them 'Citizens', contrary to his normal practice, which was to call them soldiers or companions. Throughout the assembly there were cries of, 'We are not citizens, we are soldiers.' The final result of this touching scene was to secure a continuation of their service. Caesar forgave them, except for the Tenth Legion, but this legion refused to accept such an outcome and followed Caesar to Africa, supposedly without orders.

VI. Observations

1. The successes of Pharnaces against Domitius demonstrate the difference which existed between good and bad troops. Three legions fail to put up a moment's resistance against the barbarians, and one only manages to extract itself without loss.
2. The conduct of the Sixth Legion at the Battle of Zela, which smashed all in its path, though composed of only 1,200 veterans, shows what effect a handful of brave men can have. This effect was more prominent among the ancients, and just as among the moderns it is more marked in the cavalry than the infantry.
3. The naval victory of Vatinius, with cargo vessels, against Octavius, who commanded galleys, is remarkable. Naval battles were fought like battles on land, and the Roman veterans, the bravest of men, with sword

in hand, were almost always assured of winning, whether on land or at sea. Firearms, which have produced so great a revolution on land, have wrought even greater changes at sea; battles are decided by cannonades, and as the effect of a cannon depends on the position which it occupies, the art of manoeuvring and taking up position is what decides sea battles. The bravest of troops can do nothing in a type of combat in which it is almost impossible to come to grips at close quarters. Victory is decided by 200 fiery mouths, which disable ships, disrupt manoeuvres, bring down masts and vomit death from afar. Naval tactics have thus acquired a whole new importance. Sea battles no longer have anything in common with land battles. The art of the gunner is subordinate to the art of manoeuvre which moves the vessel, giving the gun batteries favourable firing opportunities or facing up to incoming missiles in the most favourable way. If you add to the tactics adopted by each particular vessel, the general principle of tactics which dictates that every vessel must manoeuvre in the manner most appropriate to its position, in the circumstances in which it finds itself, in order to attack an enemy vessel and hit it with as many cannon balls as possible, you will have the secret of naval victory.[9]

Galleys were ships with very long oars, having little in the way of masts and sails, unable to sail into wind and unable either to blockade or to remain long at sea. Superiority at sea did not confer the same advantages as it does today. It did not prevent the enemy from crossing the seas, whether the Adriatic or the Mediterranean. Both Caesar and Antony crossed the Adriatic, from Brindisi to Epirus, in the face of superior fleets; Caesar crossed to Africa from Sicily; and although Pompey was almost always master of the sea, he derived little benefit from this. One would not say of ancient navies that 'The trident of Neptune is the sceptre of the world', a maxim which today holds true.

Chapter 14

Civil war. African campaign (46 BC)

I. Curio's operations in Africa during the year 49

After the capture of Corfinium, Caesar formed two legions out of the troops of Domitius, giving command of them to Curio and entrusting him with the government of Sicily and Africa. Curio embarked with two legions and 500 horse, escorted by ten galleys. He spent two days and three nights at sea, and reached Africa in June of the year 49 at the harbour of Aquilaria, 17 miles from Clupea (Cape Bon), in a good anchorage between two headlands. Curio disembarked there, marched off, and on the third day reached the River Bagradas (today the Medjerda), which enters the sea between Utica and Carthage. These two towns are 7 miles apart. The Camp of Scipio[1] was situated between them at the mouth of the river, on a steep rock which overlooked the sea and sloped gently towards Utica, from which it was only a mile distant. Varus, who commanded the Pompeian forces, was camped under the walls of Utica; one of his wings was covered by the town, the other by a large theatre built outside it. Two hundred merchant ships were anchored in the harbour. Curio ordered them, on pain of being treated as hostile, to proceed to the Camp of Scipio; this they immediately did. The next day he camped near Utica. He was still fortifying his camp when the vanguard of the army of King Juba[2] appeared. There followed an engagement in which this prince suffered considerable losses. The two armies remained in each others' presence in this way for several days, with each side trying to suborn the soldiers of the other. But finally, during September, they came to blows. Varus was driven back and lost 2,000 men, abandoning his camp and taking refuge behind the walls of the town, which Curio invested. At this time, news arrived from Spain of the great successes which Caesar had gained over Afranius.[3] Nevertheless, King Juba led a considerable army to relieve Utica. Curio was urged by his subordinates to position

himself at the Camp of Scipio and await the arrival of the two legions which remained in Sicily. He accepted this advice, but as he was setting off, he received information stating that Juba had returned to his kingdom and that only Saburra[4] was approaching with a part of the army. This made Curio decide to march against him. The cavalry of the two armies met at the River Bagradas. There was a lively engagement in which Saburra was beaten and his camp surprised; he lost many men. But behind him was Juba. Curio, pursuing his enemy for 12 miles, was brought to a halt by the cavalry of the king's army, who attacked the weary troops. After a bitter battle, Curio was surrounded by the Numidian cavalry. Seeing the battle lost, he tried to reach the mountains, but could not: Curio's entire army was massacred; he himself was left dead on the field of battle. Rufus, whom he had left with five cohorts to guard the camp, gave the order to embark for Sicily, but the terrified sailors gave way to panic; the fleet sailed away and the five cohorts were massacred.

II. Pompey's party rallies in Africa during the years 49, 48 and 47

During the years 48 and 47, Africa remained under the power and command of Varus, lieutenant of Pompey. The ancients divided Africa[5] into eight territories, as follows: 1. Tingitanian Mauritania, which extended from the coasts of the ocean,[6] opposite the Canaries, to those of the Mediterranean, opposite Malaga: this land belonged to Syphax and was called the Kingdom of Bogud. It is now the Kingdom of Morocco and Fez. 2. Mauritania Caesariensis, which is the present country of Algeria. 3. Africa proper,[7] which comprised Numidia and the lands of Carthage: it is now Constantine and the states of Tunis and Tripoli. It extended to the Gulf of Sirte. After the fall of Carthage, the Romans maintained a praetor at Utica; they only penetrated into Mauritania under Claudius. 4. Cyrenaica is the present country of Derna, which included the Pentapolis.[8] The town of Cyrene was built by the Spartans. This was a powerful country. The inhabitants had boundary disputes with Carthage in the time of its greatness and the frontier was fixed at Arae Philaenorum, marked by two altars. 5. Marmarica ended at the town of Catabathmus, where there terminates a deep valley

leading out of Egypt, which was once refreshed by the waters of the Nile. 6. Egypt. 7. Libya. 8. Ethiopia.

Juba, who reigned in Numidia, was attached to Pompey. Scipio[9] led the remains of the army of Pharsalus to Africa. Labienus also made his way there. Cato was in command at Dyrrachium during the Battle of Pharsalus; afterwards he withdrew with the fleet to Cyrene, from where, with 10,000 men, he marched across the desert of the Gulf of Sirte, which took him thirty days. He used donkeys to carry water. He wintered at the prosperous town of Leptis, where he joined Scipio, Varus, Labienus and the sons of Pompey. Juba pretended to supremacy over them all. Cato contented himself with governing Utica; Scipio, who was of consular status, was recognised as the general. In the year 47, he had under his command ten legions and many cavalry and light troops. Juba had four legions equipped in Roman fashion and Numidian cavalry riding without bridles. These forces were sufficiently formidable that Caesar's enemies in Italy expected Scipio in Rome. He was master of the sea, and his fleet was very considerable. Three years had made people forget the disasters of Pharsalus. The destiny of the world could still have changed. But Scipio was without talent, with nothing to his credit but a famous name.

III. Caesar's operations during January

Caesar awoke at the sound of danger. He left Rome, crossed to Sicily, camped so close to the sea shore that the water wetted his tent, embarked with six legions and 2,000 cavalry and set sail on 27 December[10] (7 October by our calendar). After a three-day voyage, he reached Cape Bon. The following day he anchored off the beaches of Ruspina, near Hadrumentum, where Scipio had a garrison. He spent several days at sea to rally his convoy, which had been dispersed by strong winds, found itself unable to round Cape Bon and was spread out at random along the coast of Africa. When he disembarked he had with him only 4,000 men; he camped near the little town of Ruspina. It was on this same beach that Hannibal landed on his return to Italy before proceeding to Zama,[11] and it was near the beaches of Clupea, on Cape Bon, that Regulus[12] disembarked during the First Punic War.[13] Ruspina is 100 miles from Utica and 50 miles south of Cape Bon.

Caesar circled around the walls of Hadrumentum, but did not have enough men to blockade the town. Scipio was at Utica with his army. Feeling the danger of his position, Caesar moved south to increase his distance from Scipio. The free town of Leptis Minor opened its gates to him, he occupied the island of Cercina, which supplied him with corn, and several towns and fortresses submitted on word of his arrival. But these were modest gains and insufficient to overcome his anxieties. His whole convoy was wandering the seas and at risk of being captured by the numerous fleets of the enemy. He found himself exposed, with just a handful of men, to whatever Scipio might choose to do.

In this critical position, he adopted an extreme course, but one which was in conformity with the state of affairs. He placed troops in garrison at Leptis Minor and Ruspina, and embarked with seven cohorts in order to avoid Labienus, who was marching against him, hoping either to reunite his fleet or to go and fetch the remainder of his army from Sicily. He spent the night on board ship, but at daybreak, when he gave the order to hoist anchor, he had word of the sighting of the part of his convoy about which he was most concerned. He then disembarked and went to his camp at Ruspina, which he fortified. Caesar sallied out two days later with thirty cohorts to gather food, but he soon found himself in the presence of Labienus, who attacked him with a substantial force consisting of 1,600 Gallic cavalry, 8,000 Numidians and 30,000 infantry. The battle was hard-fought and of critical importance. Caesar was surrounded by the enemy cavalry, but he broke through Labienus' centre, which enabled him to return to his camp, though pursued by the Numidians and not without being in grave danger. This combat took place on 4 January (14 October by our calendar), eight or nine days after leaving Sicily.

Meanwhile, as soon as Scipio had learned of Caesar's arrival at Ruspina, he had assembled his whole army at Utica. He had then followed Labienus and joined him a few days after the combat just mentioned, and camped with his whole army near Hadrumentum. Caesar found himself blockaded in his camp, and his foragers could not venture out. The cavalry fed their horses on seaweed which they washed in fresh water. It was feared that Scipio might cut him off from the sea, which was a mile from the camp. Caesar protected his communications with entrenchments and towers down

to the shore. He disembarked the crews of his ships to serve as archers and as crews for the catapults with which he protected his entrenchments, on which he worked with the greatest energy. Scipio, proud of his superior numbers, offered battle every day. The Gaetulians,[14] of whom there were many in Scipio's army and who maintained the greatest regard for Marius, were inclined towards Caesar, who was related to Marius, and who was at the head of the popular party; they deserted in large numbers and went over to Caesar. The town of Acylla, to the south of Ruspina, gave its support to Caesar, while the little town of Thysdra provided him with a stock of 300,000 bushels[15] of grain. However, all this was not enough to resolve his difficulties. Then his second convoy left Sicily carrying the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Legions, 1,000 archers and 800 Gallic cavalry, and came ashore on the beach opposite his camp after a four-day voyage. This substantial reinforcement changed the state of things. It was late January; he received word that most of the ships with which he had set out were still being buffeted by the winds, but that none of these vessels had fallen into the hands of his enemies.

IV. Operations up to the reunion of his army

A few days after the arrival of his reinforcements, Caesar left his camp, marched south along the coast, crossed a plain 15[16] miles wide and camped near Scipio, who occupied high ground. His cavalry gained the advantage in an engagement with that of Labienus. Scipio, expecting Juba to arrive any day, refused battle and shut himself up in his camp, drawing his food and some of his water from the town of Uzita. Caesar built entrenchments leading towards this town, stopping them at a point just outside the range of missiles from the town. Meanwhile, Juba arrived with three legions, a large number of cavalry riding without bridles and 800 regular cavalry. The next day, Scipio marched out of his camp and deployed his army behind sixty elephants. Seeing that Caesar was still carrying his entrenchments towards Uzita, Labienus placed himself in ambush in a valley which Caesar had to cross in order to reach a hill which he wished to occupy. Another lively engagement ensued, in which Caesar gained the upper hand. Water was very scarce, and in carrying his entrenchments towards Uzita, Caesar was

able to make use of several wells, which were a great benefit to him. Various skirmishes took place every day around Uzita, when finally the Ninth and Tenth Legions arrived from Sicily. This reinforcement did not stop Scipio from offering battle. The two armies emerged from their camps. Scipio's left rested on the walls of Uzita, where he reinforced the garrison in order to harass his enemy's right, which also abutted the walls. Caesar's army consisted of ten legions.

The two armies remained 400 yards apart for the whole day without coming to grips.

Finally, Varus set sail from Utica at the head of fifty-five ships in order to intercept the convoys coming from Sicily and Italy. Forty of Caesar's galleys were off Thapsus; thirteen which had become separated and were anchored near Leptis Minor were taken and burnt by Varus. As soon as Caesar heard of this, he left his camp, which was 5 miles from Leptis, boarded a brigantine, joined the main part of his fleet, pursued Varus and forced him to take refuge in Hadrumentum. He captured several galleys and burnt all his transports. As food was scarce, Caesar sent two legions with the cavalry on a 10-mile night march; they found pits filled with grain, which they took to the camp, but this did not satisfy his needs. He broke camp at Uzita at three o'clock in the morning and marched to the town of Aggar. Scipio followed him and established three camps 5 miles from Caesar, who was experiencing a severe shortage of grain: he did not hesitate to undertake a 15-mile flank march past Scipio's camp to Zeta, where Scipio had gathered supplies. He managed to take the town, but while returning, he was strongly attacked and had great trouble regaining his camp, which he only managed to do very late at night.

Labienus had adopted the Numidian way of fighting. His cavalry were far more numerous, and his light-armed troops and slingers and archers were brave and skilful, showering the legionaries with missiles. When the legionaries charged them, they immediately dispersed, making off with all speed, returning as soon as the legionaries had returned to their ranks. Caesar's cavalry did not dare engage that of the enemy, who surrounded it with large numbers of slingers and archers who killed the horses. This approach to making war was alarming: if the enemy's legions were as good as his light infantry, the outcome of this war would be uncertain, and victory difficult.

Scipio and Juba also had a large number of elephants, which never failed to affect the soldiers' morale. Caesar had some elephants brought over from Italy and familiarized his army with the sight of these monstrous animals, teaching the men where to strike them. The soldiers compared the war they were now fighting with the one in Gaul, where they had to deal with an enemy who was brave but straightforward; here, by contrast, they were always in danger of falling into some ambush.

On 21 March (2 January[17] by our calendar), Caesar reviewed his army. It had never been so fine or so numerous; 6,000 men previously left sick in depots in Italy had come to join him. He marched 5 miles[18] from his camp to offer battle to Scipio, who declined the opportunity. But wishing to come to a general engagement, and irritated equally by the lack of food, shortage of water, the way this little war was progressing and the cunning of the enemy, he left his camp at Aggar on 4 April (14 January) at three o'clock in the morning. Arriving before Thapsus, he invested the place. Thapsus was a town of the highest importance to Scipio, who decided to risk everything in order to save it. He followed Caesar by way of high ground and established two camps 7 miles from his, outside Thapsus. There were salt marshes a mile from the sea; Scipio tried to march between them and the sea to relieve the town, but Caesar had provided for this by blocking the way with a fort. Scipio then camped a mile from Caesar's siege lines and began the work of entrenching his camp. As soon as Caesar learned of this, he marched out, seeing a favourable opportunity to end the war by a decisive battle. Scipio's army was drawn up in battle formation in front of the entrenchments which he had begun to build; the elephants were on the two wings. Caesar deployed his army in three lines: the Tenth Legion and the Second held the right, the Eighth and Ninth the left, while five legions formed the centre. He intermingled his light infantry with his cavalry and formed two detachments, each of five elite cohorts combined with numerous slingers and archers, which were particularly assigned to attack the elephants.

V. Battle of Thapsus (4 April)

Scipio's soldiers were astonished to behold the enemy army. But for his part, Caesar found that Scipio's army was in a formidable position. He

was struck by the sight of the sixty-four elephants carrying towers, which were protecting the wings, the numerous cavalry, the swarm of slingers and archers – whose bravery and daring he had experienced at first hand – and by the position of the line of battle, adjacent to a camp already enclosed by entrenchments. He hesitated to give the signal, and was heard to say: 'The prospect of this attack does not please me at all.' But his troops, convinced of their superiority, shared none of his hesitation: 'Forward' cried the Tenth Legion, compelling the trumpeter to sound the charge; at once the entire right of the army began to move despite all the protests of the officers. Caesar then mounted his horse, gave the watchword 'Good Fortune' and rode straight at the enemy. The two detachments charged with attacking the elephants went into action and smothered them with projectiles. Irritated by the whistling of the stones and arrows, the animals changed direction and turned against their own army, trampling underfoot the close-packed legions, heading at all speed for the camp, where they blocked the entrances. The Moorish cavalry, which had counted on the support of the elephants, was alarmed by this unexpected development and took flight. Within the space of a few hours, the armies of Scipio and Juba were routed and their three camps successively overrun. The fugitives made for the camp which they had left the day before; but, pursued by the victors with swords in hand, they were surrounded on a hill top. They begged for mercy but in vain; the veterans, overcome by fury, killed them all. The carnage continued despite the orders and the pleas of their general, who was not only unable to save the defeated, but even tried in vain to protect a number of Roman citizens who were within his own camp and against whom the army held strong views. Ten thousand men lay dead on the battlefield; Caesar lost fifty men.

The next day, Caesar called on the town of Thapsus to surrender, displaying under its walls the sixty-four elephants equipped with towers which were the trophy of his victory; but this was in vain. He then left three legions to continue the siege and himself went to Utica. Cato was in charge of this great town. As soon as he learned that the battle had been lost, he tried to organize the inhabitants to defend the place, but they were supporters of Caesar. All he could obtain from them was that they would protect the departure of Pompeian supporters making for Spain; he killed himself with a thrust of his sword.

Juba along with a few fugitives arrived at Zama, his capital, but the inhabitants closed the gates against him. He withdrew to his country residence, where he killed himself. Scipio had put to sea with several galleys: he made all speed for Spain, but was intercepted by Caesar's fleet off Bone and died in the battle. From Thapsus, Caesar went to Hadrumentum, which he occupied without a blow struck and found Scipio's treasury. From there he made his triumphant entry into Utica. The next day, he received the news that Thapsus had fallen. Two days later, he travelled to Zama, reduced Juba's territories to a Roman province, returned to Utica, imposed fines on several towns and saw to the government of the place. He left Utica on 13 June (23 March by our calendar), landed at Cagliari after a three-day voyage, left there on 29 June and arrived at Rome during July (April by our calendar), having concluded this important war in less than six months.

VI Observations

1. The chronicler of the *Civil War* pretends that Caesar failed to nominate a rendezvous for his fleet before leaving Sicily, on the grounds that he could not be sure that any particular point on the African coast would be free of enemy ships. This assertion is so absurd that it deserves no refutation.

   This is not the sole proof of ineptitude which one finds in the *Civil War*, which is written by a man who is as mediocre as the writer of the *Gallic War* is most superior. Scipio was at Utica; he was master of all the northern coast as far as the territory of King Juba. The rendezvous which Caesar gave his fleet was undoubtedly the coasts from south of Cape Bon to the Gulf of Sirte, all this coast being clear of enemies, and this at a season when it would not have been possible for the enemy squadrons to stay at sea for long periods; but his fleet was dispersed by a storm and then hurled to the north of Cape Bon, and only reformed later on and little by little.
2. Throughout January, Caesar's position was critical in the extreme, and he only owed his safety to the fortifications of his camp and to the inability of ancient offensive weapons to destroy his ramparts, a method of defence no longer available to a modern general.

3. Four days after landing, having gathered together only a small number of men, he left garrisons in the only two towns which he held on the coast and, to avoid Labienus, returned to sea with his cohorts, at which point a large part of his convoy rejoined him.
4. During the combat which he endured some days later, Caesar clearly came out worst, whatever the author of the *Civil War* may say. Labienus adopted the fighting method which the Parthians had used against Crassus, of attacking the legions not with hand-held weapons, a type of combat in which they were invincible, but with a great many projectile weapons. These were wielded by men who were skilful, fit and as brave as they were intelligent, knowing to withdraw before a pursuit by heavily armed soldiers, but returning to overwhelm them with projectiles as soon as they had returned to their ranks in the legion. However imperfect were the projectile weapons of the day by comparison with the modern equivalents, when they were used in this way they invariably conferred the advantage.
5. Caesar's army was reunited in March; he waited too long to give battle; he seemed to doubt his own destiny; he drew unfavourable conclusions from several difficult encounters in which he had been engaged; but these meant nothing when it came to the crowning battle, and on the decisive day the legions of Scipio and Juba proved too inferior to his to be able to hold their own.
6. The conduct of Cato was applauded by his contemporaries and has been admired by history; but who benefited from his death? Caesar. Who was pleased by it? Caesar. And to whom was it a tragedy? To Rome and to his party. But, it is argued, he preferred to kill himself rather than bow down before Caesar. But who was forcing him to bow down? Why did he not follow the cavalry, or those members of his party who embarked at the port of Utica and rallied the party in Spain? What influence his name, his advice and his presence must surely have had among the ten legions which in the following year were to vie for the destinies of the world on the battlefield of Munda! Even after this defeat, what would have stopped him from joining the young Pompey at sea, who outlived Caesar and for a long period gloriously upheld the cause of the Republic? Cassius and Brutus, who were Cato's nephew and pupil,

killed themselves on the battlefield of Philippi. Cassius killed himself at a moment when Brutus was winning. Through this misunderstanding, by these desperate actions, inspired by a false courage and false ideas of grandeur, they handed victory to the triumvirate. Marius, abandoned by fortune, rose above his predicament. Driven out of Rome, he hid in the marshes of Minturnae.[19] His persistence was rewarded; he returned to Rome and became consul for the seventh time. Old, sick and arrived at the highest point of his prosperity, he killed himself in order to escape the vicissitudes of fate, but at a time when his party was triumphant. If the book of destiny had been presented to Cato, and he had read there that in just two years' time,[20] Caesar, pierced by twenty-three dagger wounds, would fall dead in the Senate at the foot of Pompey's statue, that Cicero would take the floor and angrily denounce Antony in his Philippics, would Cato still have transfixed himself? No, he killed himself out of spleen and despair. His death was the weakness of a great soul, the error of a stoic, a blot on his life.

Chapter 15

Civil war. Spanish campaign (45 BC)

The Greeks called Spain Iberia; they also called it Hesperia, since from their point of view, it lay in the direction of the setting sun.[1] The Carthaginians entered Spain through Cadiz, Malaga and Cartagena. The Romans divided it into three parts: 1. Baetica; 2. Lusitania; 3. Hispania Tarraconensis. Baetica was bounded by the Guadiana to its north, to the south the Mediterranean and the ocean, and in the direction of sunrise, Hispania Tarraconensis; this corresponds to today's provinces of Estremadura, Andalucia, Granada and Malaga. It contained 200 towns. Lusitania extended from the Guadiana to the Douro; today it is Portugal. Hispania Tarraconensis comprised the kingdom of Murcia, Valencia, Aragon, Catalonia, Navarre, the Asturias, the kingdom of León, Galicia and part of Old Castile.

I. Events in Spain during the years 48, 47 and 46

On leaving Spain after its conquest, at the end of the year 49, Caesar had left there Cassius Longinus as propraetor, a greedy and corrupt man, who had previously embezzled funds when he was quaestor in the same province. His behaviour angered the inhabitants, who, in concert with some of his troops, conspired against him; he was twice stabbed with a dagger, but survived, rallied some of his troops and put to death the conspirators. King Bogud of Mauritania crossed the sea and came to the aid of Cassius. Lepidus, who was Caesar's commander in Hispania Tarraconensis, crossed the mountains and marched to the River Baetis[2] with thirty-six cohorts in support of his colleague, whilst the quaestor Marcellus placed himself at the head of the party opposed to Cassius and persuaded it to maintain its allegiance to Caesar.

II. Young Pompey raises the Spanish. He assembles a great army

After Pharsalus, Caesar sent Trebonius as proconsul to govern Spain and restore order. Cassius took ship, sailed up the coast of Spain, was shipwrecked at the mouth of the Ebro and there perished along with his riches, the spoils of his exactions. But a few months later, the elder son of Pompey[3] landed in Spain and drove out Trebonius. After the defeat of Scipio in Africa, his brother Sextus Pompey, Labienus and Varus joined him along with the remains of the army of Africa, which enabled him to form thirteen legions. It became a matter of the highest importance to prevent an army already so formidable from growing even stronger. Caesar left Rome and reached the banks of the Baetis in twenty-three days at a point when young Pompey was besieging the town of Ulia, the only place still resisting him in all of Baetica. Caesar sent reinforcements into the town and advanced on Cordoba. Sextus Pompey, who was in command there, was alarmed and appealed for help to his brother, who lifted the siege of Ulia and hurried to him. These events came at the end of the year 46.

III. Caesar crosses the Pyrenees. Battle of Munda

At the start of 45, Caesar besieged Ategua, which opened its gates to him in early February, but he wished to end this war with a major battle. After various manoeuvres, the young Pompey, ever withdrawing in order to avoid him, finally found himself cut off at the end of the Malaga peninsula, near the town of Munda,[4] where he resolved to accept battle in a favourable position and awaited the enemy with resolution. His line of battle consisted of thirteen legions; Caesar attacked him with eight. Victory was going Pompey's way, and Caesar's cause seemed lost. He charged at the head of the Tenth Legion without managing to redress the situation, when King Bogud and his Numidians mounted an attack on Pompey's camp. Labienus detached five cohorts to protect the camp. This movement to the rear, at so critical a moment, decided the battle. Caesar's veterans thought the enemy were retreating and redoubled their efforts. Pompey's troops also perceived a retreat, and lost heart: 30,000 men were left dead on the battlefield,

including Labienus and Varus, and 3,000 Roman knights. The eagles of all thirteen legions, the greater part of the battle standards and seventeen officers of high rank were the trophies of this day, which cost the victors 1,000 dead and 500 wounded. Caesar used to say that he had fought everywhere for victory, but that at Munda he had fought for his life. Gnaeus Pompey was killed a few weeks later and his head displayed in public. His brother Sextus, who was in command at Cordoba at the time of the battle, took refuge in the mountains and survived the defeat of his party, whose standard he raised again in due course. All of Baetica submitted, the party of Pompey was entirely destroyed and the entire Roman world recognised the sway of the conqueror. The young Octavius, later the Emperor Augustus, first bore arms during this campaign, under the eyes of his doting uncle.

IV. Observations

1. Caesar took twenty-three days to travel by land from Rome to the Sierra Morena, a distance of 1,100 miles; today, travelling post by night and by day, it would take twelve days.

   What service Cato could have rendered, if only he had been present at Cordoba, at the camp of the young Pompeys, whose party, after being beaten at Pharsalus and Thapsus, was again catching fire from its embers, so powerful was he in the opinions of the people! The death of this upright man was thus a misfortune for the Senate and the Republic; he lacked patience, he did not know how to wait for the proper time and place.
2. Munda is one of the cases when Caesar attacked and gave battle despite the strong position of his enemy; as a result he was almost defeated. The movement by Labienus, though good in itself, decided the outcome. There comes a moment in battles where the smallest manoeuvre can be decisive and create victory; it is the drop of water which triggers an overflow.
3. At the Battle of Pharsalus, Caesar lost 200 men; at Thapsus, 50; at Munda, 1,000; whereas his enemies lost their whole armies. This great disparity of losses, on days so hard-fought by victor and vanquished, does not occur among modern armies, because these fight with projectile weapons, and the cannon and musket cause equal casualties on

both sides, whereas the ancients fought with bladed weapons. Up to the moment of victory there were few losses; the shields stopped the arrows, and it was only at the moment of defeat that the vanquished were massacred, in a multitude of duels in which the losers, turning their backs, received the death blow.

The commanders-in-chief of ancient armies were less exposed than those of modern armies. They could ward off projectiles with their shields. The arrows, slingshot and catapults were of modest lethality, and it was not unknown for one shield to ward off as many as 200 arrows. Today, the commander-in-chief is required every day to march to the sound of the cannon, often within range of volley fire, and in every battle within range of cannon fire, so as to be able to observe events and give orders. Things cannot be discerned at a long enough distance for generals to be able to stand out of range of the guns.

There is a school of thought that the wars of the ancients were more bloody than those of today: is this true? Modern armies engage each other every day, because of the long range of cannons and muskets. The vanguards and outposts fire on each other and often leave 500 or 600 men dead on the battlefield on either side. Among the ancients, combats were less frequent and less bloody. In modern battles, the losses in dead and wounded sustained on either side are about equal, and amount to more than the losses in ancient battles, which fell very largely on the army which was beaten.

4. It is said that Caesar was on the point of killing himself during the Battle of Munda. This would have been catastrophic for his party: he would have been beaten like Brutus and Cassius. How can a magistrate or the head of a party voluntarily abandon his followers? Does such a decision represent virtue, courage and strength of soul? Does not death put an end to all ills, all problems, all sorrows and all hardships, and is not the willingness to forfeit life the daily virtue of every soldier? Can one, should one take one's own life? Yes, some say, when one is without hope. But who, when and how can one be without hope amid this changeable scene, where the death of a single man, whether natural or inflicted, can immediately transform the nature and state of affairs?

Chapter 16

Death of Caesar (44 BC)

I. Final year of Caesar's life

Returning from Spain, Caesar arrived in Rome in October of the year 45 (the calendar by then having been reformed); he was assassinated in March of the year 44. He was for six months master of the world, celebrating a triumph for vanquishing the son of Pompey, an innovation which many found odious. Neither Marius nor Sulla had ever triumphed over the defeat of a fellow citizen.

The Senate declared him Emperor and Dictator for Life; from this time forth he always wore a laurel crown and his triumphal robe on days of festival. He created a great many new senators and patricians. He had reformed the calendar, and he ordered the reform of the civil, criminal and penal codes. He drew up plans to embellish Rome with magnificent buildings. He worked on a comprehensive map of the empire and a statistical digest of all the provinces; he charged Varro with assembling the materials for an extensive public library. He announced plans to drain the Pontine marshes, to dig a new bed for the Tiber from Rome to the sea and to construct at Ostia a harbour capable of receiving the very largest ships; he also spoke of cutting a canal through the isthmus of Corinth. He sent colonies to rebuild Corinth and Carthage.[1]

Caesar granted sincere pardons to all the survivors of the Pompeian faction and appointed to high office the heads of the leading patrician families. He was actuated by a natural spirit of generosity, but also by considerations of policy. He had crossed the Rubicon as the head of the popular party; with its support, he had vanquished the proud aristocracy clustering around Pompey. What could he possibly have achieved with two or three legions alone? How could he have won control of Italy and Rome, without sieges or battles, if the majority of the Romans and Italians had not been for him? At the start of the civil war, Pompey had two experienced legions and 30,000

men at the gates of Rome, including thirty cohorts at Corfinium. But the people were against him, so he felt constrained to abandon the Eternal City without a fight. He crossed the sea to gather together the legions in Asia, where he assembled an army, and found himself in Greece surrounded by senators and patricians. But Caesar, from the outset, was master of Rome.

After the victories of Pharsalus, Thapsus and Munda, the Pompeian party having been destroyed, the popular party and the old soldiers raised their voices and made their grievances known. Caesar was concerned by this, and sought the aid of the leading families to contain the unrest. Among nations and during revolutions, there is always an aristocracy. If you destroy it in the form of the nobility, it will immediately be recreated among the rich and powerful families of the Third Estate. If you destroy it among these, it will resurface among successful artisans and the people. A prince gains nothing by such a displacement of the aristocracy. On the contrary, he restores order by letting it continue in its natural state, by reconstituting the ancient families on new principles. Such a state of affairs was more necessary than ever at Rome. In order to maintain its superiority, Rome, the ruler of the universe, needed the magic attaching to men with names like Scipio, Aemilius Paulus, Metellus, Claudius, Fabius[2] and so on, who had conquered, governed and moulded the destinies of Europe, Asia and Africa over the course of centuries.

II. War against the Parthians

Crassus had perished with his army on the banks of the Euphrates: his legions' eagles were still in the hands of the Parthians. The Roman people demanded a revenge which the civil war had delayed for six years. In the first days of the year 44, Caesar announced plans to cross the sea, defeat the Parthians and avenge the shades of Crassus. All through the winter, he worked on the preparations for this great expedition, which would further the glory of Rome and the ambitions of Caesar. For after so bitter a civil war, there was a need for a foreign war in order to draw together the sentiments of the different factions and knit together one national army.

War against the Parthians involved two difficulties. Firstly, there was the manner of fighting of these peoples, who were all armed with projectile

weapons which were superior to ordinary weapons. The arrows of the Parthians could penetrate the shields of the legionaries. The Parthians did not stand firm and await the impact of the heavily armed soldiers, but showered them with missiles from afar. Labienus had successfully adopted this style of warfare in Africa. It is probable that Caesar would have achieved victory by countering the Parthian tactics with a large number of slingers and archers from Crete, the Balearic Islands, Spain and Africa. The second difficulty lay in the nature of the country. Invading through Upper Armenia would entail a long period of making war in mountainous territory; invading via the Euphrates and Mesopotamia would mean encountering marshes, floods and waterless deserts. None of these obstacles were beyond the wit of Caesar. A large flotilla on the Euphrates and the Tigris would have overcome the watery obstacles, and a large number of camels carrying water skins would have dispelled the aridity of the desert. Thus it is probable that he would have succeeded and carried the Roman eagles to the banks of the Indus, if only Fortune, which had favoured him throughout thirteen campaigns, had still remained faithful to him.[3] Fortune favoured Scipio throughout five campaigns, Alexander during eleven campaigns; she only abandoned Pompey in his sixteenth campaign and Hannibal in his seventeenth, leaving them no hope of entrancing this cruel mistress for one year more.

III. Assassination of Caesar. He never thought of making himself king

While this great man was preparing to fulfil such lofty destinies, the remnants of the aristocratic party, who owed their lives to his generosity, were plotting against his life: Brutus and Cassius were the chief conspirators. Brutus was a stoic and a pupil of Cato. Caesar was friendly towards Brutus and had twice saved his life, but the sect to which Brutus adhered would not admit of any sentiment which might cause him to hold back. Full of the notions hostile to tyranny which were taught in the Greek schools of philosophy, the assassination of any man who was effectively above the law was viewed by him as legitimate. As Dictator for Life, Caesar governed the entire Roman universe; the Senate was a mere shell. Things could not be

otherwise, after the proscriptions of Marius and Sulla, the violation of the laws by Pompey, five years of civil war, and with so great a number of veterans settled in Italy, attached to their generals, counting on receiving everything from the greatness of particular men, and nothing from the Republic. In such a state of affairs, the deliberative assemblies were unable to govern. It was thus the person of Caesar that guaranteed the supremacy of Rome over the universe, and assured the safety of the citizens, whatever their party: therefore his authority was legitimate.

It was not difficult for the plotters to succeed, as Caesar trusted them. Brutus, Cassius, Decimus and the rest were his friends and familiars. Caesar was confident. He believed that they were all interested in his preservation, for he protected Rome's greatness and Rome's leading men, despite the murmurings from the popular party and the army.

In order to justify a cowardly and unjustified assassination after the event, the conspirators and their supporters pretended that Caesar wished to make himself king, an obviously absurd and slanderous claim, which has nevertheless been handed down from age to age, and passes today for a historical fact. If Caesar had lived in an age which had known Numa, Tullus and the Tarquins,[4] he might perhaps have had recourse to a hallowed form of government to which people were accustomed, in order to consolidate his power and put an end to the uncertainties of the Republic. But he lived among a people who, for 500 years, had known no other authority than that of consuls, dictators and tribunes. The dignity of kings was a thing to be scorned and despised: the curule chair was higher than the throne. On what throne could Caesar have sat? On that of the kings of Rome, whose authority did not extend beyond the city's outskirts? On that of the barbarian kings of Asia, who had been defeated by men with names like Fabricius, Aemilius Paulus, Scipio, Metellus, Claudius and so on? That would have been a strange course to adopt. What! Would Caesar really have sought stability, greatness and respect in the crown which had been worn by Philip, Perseus, Attalus, Mithridates, Pharnaces or Ptolemy, men whom the citizens had seen being dragged along behind the triumphal chariot of their conquerors? The idea is absurd. The Romans were accustomed to seeing kings cooling their heels in the anterooms of their magistrates.

It has been said that Caesar hoped to be proclaimed not as king of Rome but as king of the provinces, as if the peoples of Greece, Asia Minor or Syria had greater respect for the overturned throne on which Perseus, Antiochus, Attalus or Ptolemy had sat, than for the curule chair of Lucullus, Sulla, Pompey and Caesar himself. This notion also is thus devoid of reason.

Caesar always followed the popular forms, up to the last moment of his life. He did nothing without a decree of the Senate; the magistratures were filled by the vote of the people, and, if he arrogated to himself the reality of power, he allowed all the republican forms to continue. He went about without a bodyguard, like a simple citizen. His house was without ostentation, he went daily to dine with his friends, he listened attentively to speeches, to the assembly of the people and to the Senate. If Caesar had really wanted to be king, his first action would have been to surround himself with a good bodyguard; he did no such thing, and repeatedly refused the urging of his friends, who sensed the unrest among the defeated faction and believed that a bodyguard was necessary to the safety of his person. Although Dictator, he sought the consulship in this very year alongside Antony, sharing in all the duties of this office. The statues of Pompey had been overturned; he restored them, to acclaim. He did not encourage any change in the sentiments of his army, which always remained republican and attached to the popular and democratic party.

What proofs are offered by his accusers? They cite four anecdotes, which are probably false or inaccurate since Cicero, Florus and Velleius do not mention them; but, even admitting them to be true, they prove nothing. They say, firstly, that on 26 January,[5] while returning from a religious ceremony on the Alban Mount, a member of the people hailed him as king, whereupon the crowd remained silent and dismayed, and he replied that he was not king but Caesar. Secondly, that around the same time a man of the people placed a crown of laurel with a royal diadem on his statue. Thirdly, that while celebrating the Lupercalia, the consul Antony, who was one of the Luperci, approached Caesar, who was seated on a dais, dressed in his triumphal robe and with his crown of laurel on his head, and presented him with a diadem, whereupon Caesar, instead of placing it on his head, sent it to the Capitol, saying that Jupiter was the only king of the Romans. (These Lupercalian festivals were extravagant; the Luperci ran through the town

naked, carrying leather whips with which they struck the passers-by; the women most eligible held out their hands to be struck, believing that this would help them to become pregnant.) Fourthly, that Lucius Cotta, one of the priests in charge of the Sibylline Books, said that the Parthians could only be defeated by a king. People even went further to alarm the Romans; it was said that Caesar as king would transfer the seat of the empire to Alexandria or Troy.

These then are the feeble grounds on which the worthy Plutarch, the libellous Suetonius and various prejudiced writers have built so implausible a theory. If Caesar had perceived some advantage to his authority from sitting on a throne, he would have achieved this through the acclamations of the army and the Senate, prior to allowing the Pompeians to resume their seats there. He would not achieve such a goal by having himself proclaimed king by a drunkard during a procession, in having the Sibyl credited with saying that only a king could defeat the Parthians, or in having himself presented with a diadem during the Lupercalia. He would have persuaded his legions that their glory and their prosperity depended on a new form of government which would put his family out of reach of the toga-wearing factions; he would have let it be said in the Senate that it was necessary to put the laws out of reach of the victorious soldiery and to protect private property from the greed of the veterans, by raising a monarch onto the throne. But he followed a different course: though conqueror, he only governed as consul, Dictator or tribune; thus he reinforced the ancient forms of the Republic instead of discrediting them. After the successes which followed the crossing of the Rubicon, Caesar did nothing to alter the institutions of the Republic. Augustus himself, long after, when whole generations of republicans had been destroyed by proscriptions and the war of the triumvirs, never had the idea of raising up a throne; Tiberius and Nero after him never thought of such a thing, because it could never enter the head of the master of a great empire to clothe himself in a majesty so scorned and so odious. If the royal crown had seemed useful to Augustus and his successors, they would have placed it on their head; but Caesar, who was thoroughly Roman and populist in sentiment, and who, in both his speeches and his writings, ever invoked the name of the Roman people with such fondness, would only have assumed the crown with regret.

Thus Caesar cannot have wished to do what he is accused of, did not wish it, did nothing towards it and acted entirely otherwise. Assuredly, he would not have chosen the eve of his departure for the Euphrates to wage a difficult war, to overthrow the usages of five centuries in order to set up new ones. Who would have governed Rome during the absence of the king? A regent! A governor! A viceroy! This in a city accustomed to rule by a consul, a praetor, a Senate and tribunes.

In murdering Caesar, Brutus yielded to a prejudice of education which he had absorbed from the schools of Greece. Brutus equated Caesar to those obscure tyrants of towns in the Peloponnese who usurped the authority of their town with the aid of a few intriguers. He refused to recognise that Caesar's authority was legitimate because it was necessary and protective, because it preserved the interests of Rome, because it sprang from the opinion and the will of the people. With Caesar dead, he was succeeded by Antony, Octavian, Tiberius, Nero, and subsequently by every possible variety of mankind for 600 years; but neither the Republic nor a royal monarchy came about during this period, a sure sign that neither the one nor the other was still appropriate to the age or to its circumstances. Caesar did not wish to be king because he could not have wished it; he could not have wished it because, after him, for 600 years, none of his successors wished it. It would have been a strange policy to replace the curule chair of the conquerors of the world with the despised and rotten throne of the vanquished.

Appendix

Conventions adopted for the translation of measurements

Napoleon expresses distances, dimensions and weights in the pre-revolutionary French units with which he had been brought up. These units are retained in the present translation, and the name of each is given as that of a close English equivalent.

French unit	Size	Translated as
Distances		
Pied	325 mm 1.10 Roman feet (1.07 English feet)	foot (ft)
Pouce	1/12 *pied*	inch (in)
Toise	6 *pieds*	2 yards
Mille	1,000 *toises* 1,949 metres 1.32 Roman miles (1.21 English miles)	mile
Lieue	*circa* 4.7 km	2.4 (French) miles
Weights		
Livre	490 grams 1.49 Roman pounds (1.08 English pounds)	pound (lb)
Once	1/16 *livre*	ounce
Gros	⅛ *Once* 3.82 grams	⅛ ounce
Dry measure		
Boisseau	12.7 litres 1.45 Roman *modius* (0.35 English bushel)	bushel

Numbers in the translation are rounded where necessary to about the same number of significant figures as in the original.

This approach is intended to preserve the style of the original so it can be read easily, while also preserving the internal consistency of Napoleon's arithmetic.

So the distance units given in the translation are the pre-revolutionary French feet and miles, plus the use of 'yard' to mean three (French) feet. An alternative would be to translate '*toise*' as 'fathom', but this would read oddly in English in an account of mostly terrestrial matters.

Thus, a distance of 'one foot' in the translation is in fact a French pre-revolutionary foot, or '*pied*'. Similarly, weights in the translation are in French pounds.

Different lengths of *Lieue*, or league, were used in France for different purposes. From some of Napoleon's arithmetic concerning field fortifications it is possible to deduce that for his purposes, one *Lieue* was equal or close to 2.4 *milles*, which is the length of the '*lieue tarifaire*'.

The length of the Roman mile was 5,000 Roman feet, or its equivalent, 1,000 (double) marching paces; hence its full name of '*mille passuum*'. The Roman army (single) marching pace was 30 Roman inches, just as the British army marching pace of modern times is the slightly greater distance of 30 English inches.

Note that the French mile was close to ⅓ longer than the Roman mile. Napoleon generally makes due allowance for this difference when translating distances from Roman to French miles.

Notes

Chapter 1: Gallic war. First campaign (58 BC)

1. The First Edition gives 60 BC.
2. In fact Caesar did not govern Cisalpine Gaul at this stage in his career.
3. In his own campaigns, Napoleon used the phrase 'ordinary contributions' to refer to outright seizures of enemy money and property. The figure of eight million seems low; according to Suetonius, an annual tribute of 40 million *sestertii* was imposed on the defeated Gauls at the end of the war.
4. The province of Transalpine Gaul.
5. At this time, the Roman calendar had fallen out of line with the seasons; it was to be reformed by Caesar in 46 BC. Here, the later date of 13 April refers to the calendar in use at the time; Napoleon is saying that the same day was 23 January according to the later Julian calendar. Napoleon assumes a uniform discrepancy between the Roman and Julian calendars of about eighty days. In fact, by 46 BC, it proved necessary to insert a total intercalary adjustment of ninety days so as to ensure that 1 January of the following year (45 BC) would fall at the desired season, so inaugurating the Julian calendar. Most of the ninety-day difference had built up in the five turbulent years prior to 46 BC, when the customary insertion of intercalary months was entirely neglected. Thus, Napoleon's assumed discrepancy between the two calendars is too large except in the last year or so before the reform. However, few commentators are any more accurate.
6. Caesar says 110,000.
7. Napoleon's analysis of Roman field fortifications evidently derives partly from his knowledge of classical history and partly from his training as an artillery officer. He here assumes that a soldier could dig out (and place on the bank) an average of $10ft^3$ of soil per hour.

8. Napoleon's figures imply a somewhat under-strength legion of some 3,800 men.
9. See Note 5.

Chapter 2: Gallic war. Second campaign (57 BC)

1. The Nervii.
2. The First Edition gives 15ft.
3. Caesar's account of the conquest of Gaul, the title of which is variously translated in English. Its usual Latin title is *C. Iulii Caesaris Commentarii de Bello Gallico*.
4. 'Sixteen' in the first edition. 'Eighteen' is consistent with the rest of Napoleon's text; 'sixteen' is not.
5. This Observation should properly apply not to the contravallation at Falais (where Caesar gives no dimensions for the ditch) but to the fortified camp at Pont-à-Vaire described in Part I of this chapter. In Caesar's description of the latter fortification, he merely specifies 'a bank 12ft high and an 18ft ditch'; some translators interpret the latter figure as relating to the depth, rather than the width, of the ditch. Napoleon disagrees.

   This Observation strongly suggests that Napoleon was working from a French translation of Caesar's Commentaries, rather than the Latin original. Napoleon is known to have taken with him on his travels French translations of classical works, and he had only a limited command of Latin.

Chapter 3: Gallic war. Third campaign (56 BC)

1. The events of this chapter run from late 57 BC into 56 BC.
2. This is Caesar's lieutenant Servius Sulpicius Galba, not to be confused with King Galba of Soissons in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4: Gallic war. Fourth campaign (55 BC)

1. The First Edition gives the year 54, which does not make sense.

2. It should be noted that the bridging techniques available to Napoleon's armies were substantially identical to those employed by Caesar's forces almost nineteen centuries earlier.
3. In Napoleon's somewhat abbreviated account of Caesar's bridge, he mentions four piles at each pier. Caesar's own description mentions at least one further pile on the downstream side of each pier, raked at an angle to resist the current. Napoleon presumably takes this into account in here assigning five piles to each pier.
4. Napoleon actually refers here to goat skins, but the figures which follow would seem more applicable to larger animals such as cattle.
5. Napoleon seems to envisage something like modern chest waders and a lifejacket. It is just possible to imagine a modern soldier, with a modern weapon, operating in the way described. But it seems scarcely conceivable that a soldier of the early nineteenth century, equipped with a muzzle-loading flintlock weapon, could have loaded, aimed and fired to good effect while floating about in the sort of rig proposed by Napoleon.

Chapter 5: Gallic war. Fifth campaign (54 BC)

1. Quintus Tullius Cicero, younger brother of the statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero.
2. The First Edition says 15ft deep; Caesar does not specify width or depth. See Chapter 2, Note 5.
3. To be more precise, Napoleon says that a cartridge weighs 6 *gros* or about 23 grams; see Appendix.
4. The First Edition has an area ten times smaller, evidently in error.
5. The First Edition here gives a time of 'thirty minutes at most', which seems wrong. In Chapter 1, Napoleon indicates that a 2-yard length of fortification entailed 324ft^3 of excavation, and that a man could dig at a rate of 10ft^3 per hour. Also in Chapter 1, he implies that there was enough room for twelve men to dig at once in a 2-yard length of ditch, and points out that on this basis, it would take two to three hours to build the fortification (not 30 minutes). This may be compared with the three hours (Caesar says less than three hours) taken by the enemy

to build a contravallation around Cicero's camp in Part III of this chapter.

6. One answer to Napoleon's question surely lies in the trench systems of the First World War. Being essentially below ground, the trench system and its occupants had considerable protection against both small-arms and artillery fire, while the requisite obstacle against infantry attack was supplied by barbed wire (also resistant to artillery) in place of the Roman ditch and rampart. Barbed wire was invented in the 1860s.

Chapter 6: Gallic war. Sixth campaign (53 BC)

1. See Chapter 4.

Chapter 7: Gallic war. Seventh campaign (52 BC)

1. The First Edition says twelve.
2. In the First Edition, Napoleon accidentally gives these dimensions as *toises* rather than *pieds*: see Appendix.
3. The First Edition incorrectly gives circumvallation. (A contravallation is the fortification facing the besieged town. A circumvallation is an outer line of fortification used to hold off a relieving force.)
4. Caesar says 10 (Roman) miles, or about 8 French miles.
5. When Vercingetorix sent out his cavalry to raise a relief force, he told them he had only enough food for thirty days.

Chapter 8: Gallic war. Eighth campaign (50 BC)

1. This chapter in fact covers the years 51 and 50 BC.
2. 50 BC.

Chapter 9: Civil war. Italian campaign (49 BC)

1. In his advice to the reader on how best to manage a coup d'état, Napoleon is of course speaking from personal experience.

Chapter 10: Civil war. Spanish campaign (49 BC)

1. Caesar indicates that a further three legions were ordered to follow on.
2. The First Edition here refers incorrectly to Caesar's camp rather than the town.
3. Caesar says 22 miles; Napoleon makes allowance for the fact that the French mile was longer than the Roman.
4. Aside from commanding a Pompeian army, Marcus Terentius Varro was one of Rome's leading intellectuals and a prolific author.
5. Quintus Cassius Longinus was brother or cousin to Gaius Cassius Longinus, who was to play a leading role in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC.
6. The First Edition wrongly says July.
7. First Edition: August.
8. This seems to allude to a passage in which Caesar says that in the panicky atmosphere of a civil war, soldiers are more likely to be swayed by their fears than their sense of duty. Both Caesar and Napoleon might have had in mind the informers who kept Caesar abreast of events in the camp of Afranius.
9. The First Edition has 403.
10. Cf. Chapter 5, Note 5.
11. This implies that each man could dig some 11.6ft^3 per hour: see Chapter 5, Note 5.

Chapter 11: Civil war. Campaign in Thessaly (48 BC)

1. Napoleon variously refers to this place as Orco or Erisso. The more common name is adopted here in order to avoid confusion.
2. Napoleon here calls the river Aspro and later Apsus.
3. Napoleon uses the terms Dyrrachium and Durazzo interchangeably.
4. Here (and in two similar references a few lines later) Napoleon refers incorrectly to Caesar's right, rather than his left. An equivalent correction has been made earlier in the chapter, in Napoleon's initial description of Caesar's fortified lines.
5. See Note 6 to Chapter 5.

Chapter 12: Civil war. Alexandrian campaign (47 BC)

1. Napoleon refers to the two harbours at Alexandria as the *Port-Neuf* (new harbour) and *Port-Vieux* (old harbour). They are here called the Great Harbour and the Harbour of Eunostus.
2. King Ptolemy XIII.
3. Aulus Gabinius led an army to Egypt in 55 BC, at the behest of Pompey, to restore King Ptolemy XII to his throne. He left behind troops to protect Ptolemy.
4. The great lighthouse of Alexandria.
5. Mithridates of Pergamon, a son of King Mithridates VI of Pontus, who had been one of Rome's greatest adversaries. He was of Persian, Macedonian and Celtic ancestry.
6. This refers to the failed naval attack on Caesar's convoy.
7. Tiberius Claudius Nero, whose son Tiberius became the second Roman emperor. The subsequent emperors Caligula, Claudius and Nero were also descended from him.
8. It is generally understood that the latter parts of Caesar's account of the Civil War, beginning with the Alexandrian campaign, were not written by Caesar himself.
9. The First Edition here gives the right bank, which appears to be an error.
10. This corresponds to Napoleon's earlier summary of events. By contrast, the writer of the Latin account implies that from Pelusium, Mithridates headed west along the sea shore directly towards Alexandria, as opposed to travelling up the Delta.

Chapter 13: Civil war. Illyrian campaign (47 BC)

1. Pharnaces II of Pontus was the youngest child of King Mithridates VI of Pontus.
2. This was a new camp close to the town.
3. In 67 BC.
4. 'I came, I saw, I conquered.'
5. Marcus Octavius, one of Pompey's lieutenants.

6. In 86 BC, during the First Mithridatic War, Athens was besieged and captured by the Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Sulla. He was reluctantly persuaded to spare the remaining inhabitants by appeals to remember the city's past greatness.
7. The title given to a Dictator's deputy.
8. According to Suetonius, the limit on rent remission was 2,000 *sestertii* in Rome and 500 in the rest of Italy. There were 4 *sestertii* in a *denarius,* so these figures equate to 500 and 125 *denarii*. A *denarius* was a silver coin weighing about 4.5 grams, comparable with the standard one franc coin introduced by Napoleon which contained 5 grams of silver. Perhaps Napoleon thought of a franc as roughly equivalent to a denarius; viewed in these terms, his figure of 250 francs is intermediate between Caesar's town and country rates.
9. It is often said that Napoleon's skills as a general were offset by a marked lack of talent in relation to naval matters. This passage does little to dispel such an impression.

Chapter 14: Civil war. African campaign (46 BC)

1. A camp built long before, in 204 BC, by Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War against Carthage, and otherwise known as the Castra Cornelia.
2. King Juba I of Numidia, an ally of the Pompeians.
3. See Chapter 10.
4. Juba's military commander.
5. Africa here means the countries of North Africa along the Mediterranean.
6. The Atlantic.
7. The Roman province of Africa, established following the defeat of Carthage.
8. Five affiliated Greek colonies, headed by Cyrene.
9. Metellus Scipio, a descendant of Scipio Africanus.
10. The First Edition has September, which is incorrect.
11. Scipio Africanus defeated the Carthaginian army under Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 BC, so ending the Second Punic War.

12. Regulus fought the Carthaginians during the First Punic War in 255 BC. He was captured, and sent to Rome on parole carrying peace proposals. After supposedly urging the Roman Senate to reject the proposals, he insisted on honouring his parole and returning to Carthage, where the Carthaginians executed him.
13. The First Edition wrongly says Second.
14. Gaetulia lay to the south of Mauretania. In 105 BC, Marius had fought in Africa and defeated King Jugurtha of Numidia.
15. Napoleon uses Caesar's figure of 300,000, even though Caesar's text referred to the Roman *modius*, which Napoleon renders as *boisseau*. The pre-revolutionary French bushel or *boisseau*, which Napoleon presumably had in mind, was some 50 per cent larger than the *modius*. The error may well lie, not with Napoleon, but with whoever prepared the French translation of the Latin original to which Napoleon referred. (See Appendix, also Chapter 2, Note 5)
16. Fifteen Roman miles; about 11 French miles.
17. The First Edition says 12 January.
18. The First Edition says 20 miles.
19. In 88 BC, in an earlier civil war, Gaius Marius hid in the marshes of Minturnae from his rival Sulla.
20. The First Edition wrongly says four years.

Chapter 15: Civil war. Spanish campaign (45 BC)

1. In Greek mythology, the Hesperides were the demi-goddesses of evening and of the golden light of sunsets.
2. The Guadalquivir.
3. Gnaeus Pompeius.
4. The actual location of the Battle of Munda remains uncertain.

Chapter 16: Death of Caesar (44 BC)

1. Both cities had been destroyed by Rome in 146 BC.

2. Each of these leading Roman families supplied Rome with a succession of prominent leaders. For example, over thirty members of the Scipio clan achieved high office.
3. Napoleon himself had dreamed of extending his conquests as far as India, especially in the context of his expedition to Egypt in 1798.
4. Kings of early Rome.
5. The First Edition incorrectly gives 26 June.

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